■ **World / A11**

Sex raps force UN refugee chief to quit

■ **Business / B1**

Merger of ATM networks seen by July

■ **Sports / A24**

Iverson gets 2nd MVP as East topples West

■ **Across / A15**

Kidnappers seize agriculture official, demand P200,000

Tanong ng Bayan / A18

May saysay pa ba ang Edsa I?

CELLCARD KADA ARAW, CELLPHONE KADA LINGGO! Text 2910 now!

Scientists enlist cosmic rays to fight terrorism

BAKA SA SUSUNOD, PSYCHIC NA!

WASHINGTON—Cosmic ray detectors, already used to look into the great Cheops pyramid in Egypt, could be enlisted to peer into cargo holds in a bid to prevent possible terror

SCIENTISTS/ A17

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

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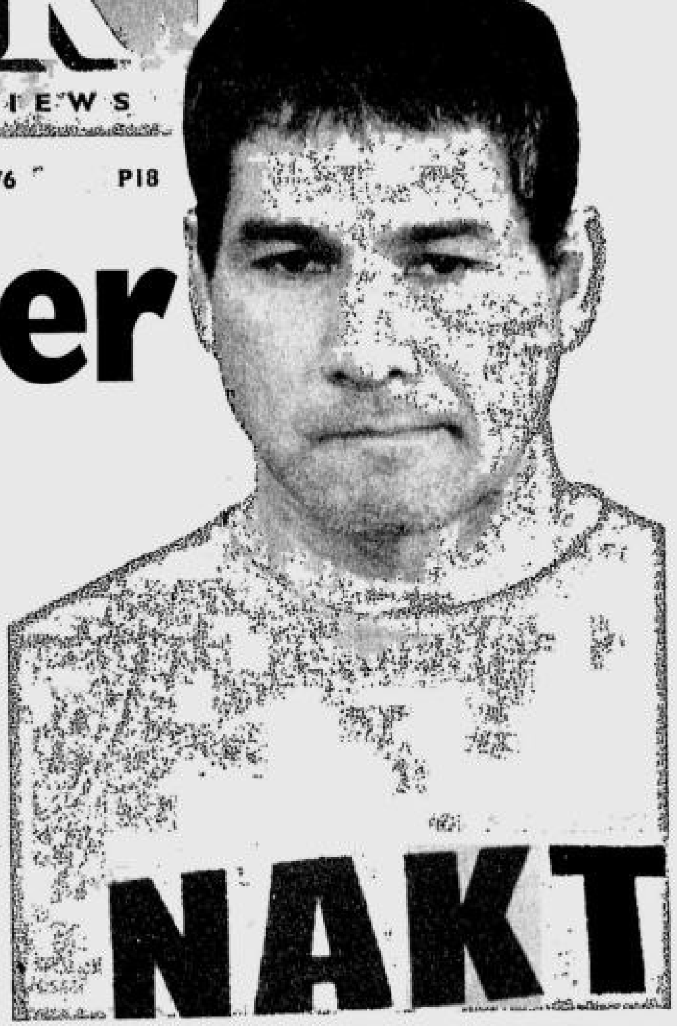
Tuesday, February 22, 2005 ★★ 44 pages / 4 sections / Vol. 20 / No. 76 P18

Ex-solon's partner linked to kidnap

Cops hunt close friend of victim's ma



FORMER Rep. Mitchell Gumabao (aka actor Dennis Roldan) is presented to media.

JOAN BONDOC

By Christian V. Esguerra

POLICE are hunting a supposed girlfriend of former Rep. Dennis Roldan after he pointed to her as one of the alleged masterminds of the kidnapping of a 3-year-old boy, a top intelligence officer said yesterday.

Police intelligence director Robert Delfin identified the woman as Suzette See Wang and said she was a close friend of the Chinese-Filipino boy's mother.

But little else is known about her, or at least there is little the police have revealed so far about her.

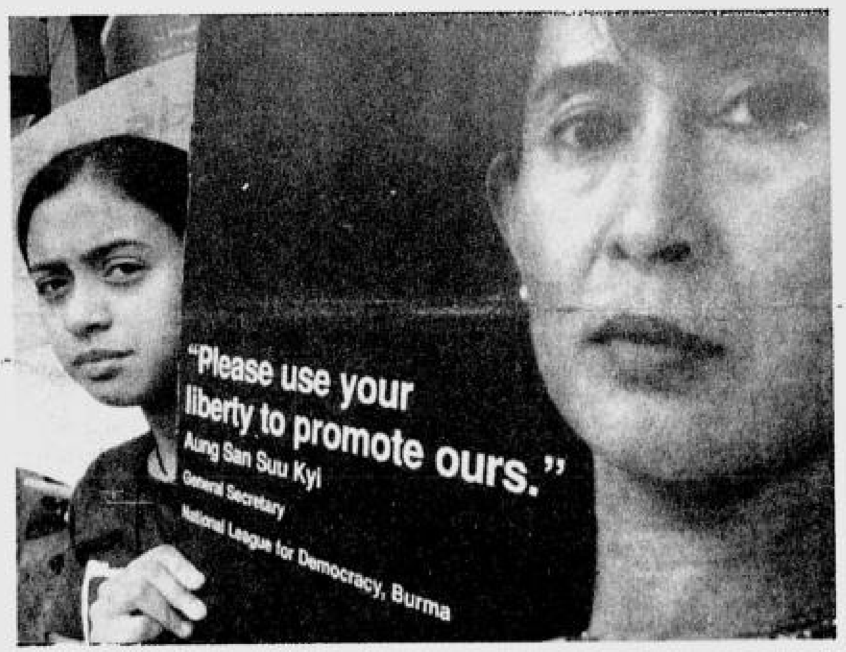
Delfin, who also heads the Police Anti-Crime Emergency Response (Pacer) team, referred to Wang as the "other mastermind."

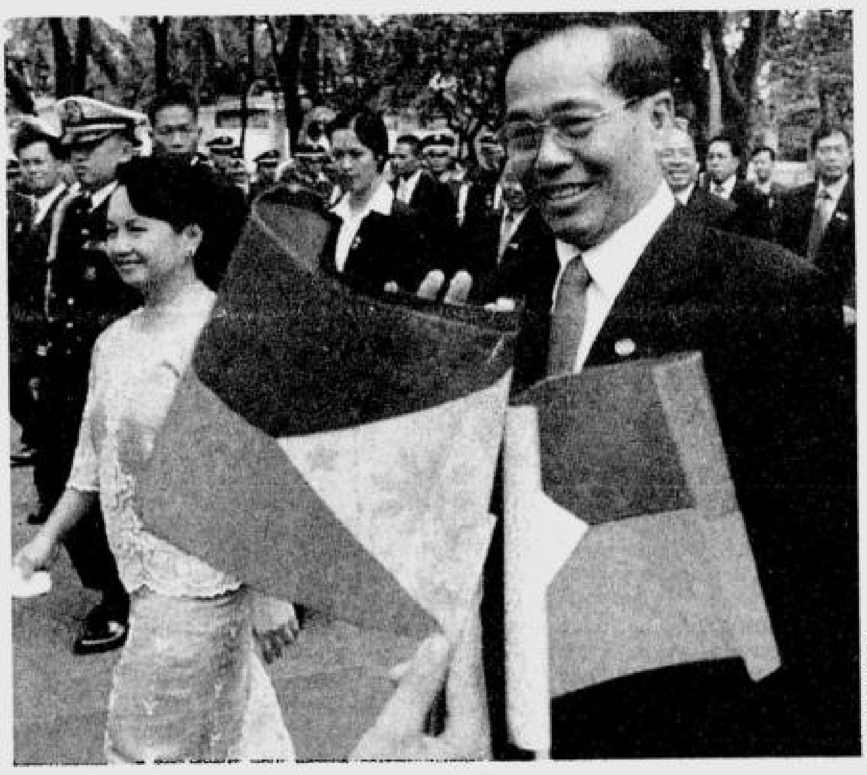
Delfin earlier alleged that one of the seven suspects now detained had claimed that Roldan, a former congressman of Quezon City and an actor in his younger days, masterminded the kidnap operation.

"There's admission in his [Roldan's] part," Delfin told reporters after Roldan and six companions—in handcuffs—were paraded before the media at Camp Crame.

"He admitted that Suzette was the source of the information, that she was the one who picked the boy as the subject of the kidnapping because his family was supposedly

EX-SOLON'S/ A7


"Please use your liberty to promote ours."
Aung San Suu Kyi
General Secretary
National League for Democracy, Burma



EDWIN BACASMAS

A PICTURE of detained Burmese leader Aung San Suu Kyi is held by a member of the Free Burma Coalition during a protest rally against the visit of Burmese Prime Minister Soe Win (right photo), who was welcomed by President Macapagal-Arroyo in Malacañang.

ERIK ARAZAS

RP mutes criticism of Burma's rights record

THE PHILIPPINES gave the new military leader of Burma (Myanmar) a gentle reminder about improving human rights but said it was committed to expanding trade and diplomatic links with Rangoon's junta.

President Macapagal-Arroyo reiterated her concern about the detention of opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi in talks with the visiting Burmese prime minister, Lt. Gen. Soe Win, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said.

"She has expressed this before in Asean (the Association of South East Asian Nations) and the fact that she took this up directly is a signal of our hope that democratic reforms will take place as soon as possible," Bunye told reporters.

Suu Kyi has spent more than half the time since 1989 under house arrest. Her latest spell began in May 2003.

The Burmese military, which has ruled in one guise or another since 1962, refused to acknowledge her party's landslide election victory in 1990 and has detained hundreds of opposition figures.

Dozens of human rights activists held a rally at Chino Roces Bridge (formerly Mendiola) near Malacañang to protest against the brief visit by Soe Win, who arrived on Sunday evening and flew home yesterday.

During Soe Win's visit, Philippine officials held talks with their Burmese counterparts on ways to improve ties in the furniture and construction industries and to expand trade in semi-precious jewels.

RP MUTES/ A17

Nat'l ID plan costs ₱1.6 B, says lawmaker

By Carlito Pablo and Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

AT LEAST P1.6 billion will have to be spent by the government to provide every Filipino aged 15 to 65 with an ID that has a magnetic strip containing information about the card holder.

That is if the government foots the bill and does not require citizens to pay for their own IDs, according to party-list Rep. Teodoro Casiño (Bayan Muna).

"The P1.6-billion estimate is based on a very conservative estimate of P35 per digitized card to be disseminated to Filipinos aged 15 to 65," Casiño said.

There are 45.3 million Filipinos belonging to this age group based on data from the National Statistics Office.

Casiño said a tamper-proof card would cost P50 each.

He said the P1.6-billion esti-

NAT'L ID/ A17

The (new) comer in Inquirer

By Louie C. Camino

FOLLOWING is the first article ever written by the author, then the newly hired Night editor, for the INQUIRER's anniversary supplement on Dec. 9, 1996.

Mr. Camino, who died on Feb. 16, will be laid to rest today at the Manila Memorial Park in Sucat, Parañaque City, after the 9 a.m. Mass at the St. Andrew Chapel, Holy Trinity Memorial Chapels on Sucat Road.

We are reprinting the article to pay tribute to him and his passion for newspapering.—Ed.

I AM back in Manila, working in the INQUIRER. This is newspapering.

It is being concerned with issues that affect the nation and the

THE NEW/ A18

THE ORIGINAL EDSA

Regained RP democracy work in progress—Cory

By Fe Zamora

FORMER President Corazon Aquino has urged Filipinos to commemorate the Edsa or "People Power" uprising of Feb. 22-25, 1986 by praying for peace and helping each other "so we can make this democracy work for everybody."

The country's democracy, which was regained at Edsa following the ouster of the Marcos dictatorship, "is a work in progress ... For all of us who believe in democracy and who want our country to succeed, [we must do] our share in helping others," she said.

Aquino was swept into power following the historic Edsa I that pitted her and the legions of pro-democracy Filipinos against the authoritarian regime.

The uprising started on the afternoon of Feb. 22, 1986, a Saturday, when then Marcos' defense minister, Juan Ponce Enrile, and then Armed Forces vice chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Fidel V. Ramos, announced their withdrawal of support from the strongman during a press conference in Camp Aguinaldo.

Then Manila Archbishop Jaime Cardinal Sin and Ms Aquino's brother-in-law Butz appealed for mass action on Edsa, fronting Camp Crame, where the breakaway military group, led by Enrile and Ramos, had holed in.

The next day, the crowd had swelled, closing traffic on Edsa, a main thoroughfare that traverses Metro Manila.

A worried Marcos tried to disperse the crowd by sending tanks to Edsa. But the ploy backfired as nuns, young girls and old women held back the tanks with flowers and prayers.

REGAINED/ A18

RUFFY HOMILLADA

FORMER President Corazon Aquino with the Carmelite nuns.

Floating logs missing, says Madrigal

By TJ Burgonio and Volt Contreras

WHERE have all the logs gone?

The logs that were washed down the forests of Aurora and Quezon into the seas and rivers at the height of last year's killer typhoons had disappeared, opposition Sen. Jamby Madrigal said yesterday.

Madrigal, a member of the Senate committee on environment, made the discovery during a recent aerial survey of the two provinces in Luzon, which bore the brunt of the series of typhoons that hit the country in November and December.

"All the logs . . . that were transported by the floods have disappeared. The people I talked to were not given wood for their houses," she said at a press forum.

"We don't know where they [logs] are, and these are for the people," she later told reporters.

What's more troubling is that the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR)

FLOATING/ A18

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Northern and Eastern Luzon will have cloudy skies with rainshowers while the eastern sections of Visayas will experience mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and thunderstorms. The rest of the country will have partly cloudy to at times cloudy skies with isolated rainshowers.

COMPILED BY. RAY LEYESA, PDI RESEARCH/02/22/05 SOURCE: PAGASA

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	Partly Cloudy
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Roxas	Partly Cloudy
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	Cebu	Partly Cloudy
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	Tacloban	Partly Cloudy
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Partly Cloudy
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Partly Cloudy
Legazpi	Partly Cloudy	Cagayan de Oro	Partly Cloudy
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	Davao	Partly Cloudy

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Bishops say gov't 'Ligtas-Buntis' campaign an assault on family

By Jerome Aning

AN ASSAULT on the family.

This was how the influential Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines described the government's "Ligtas-Buntis" campaign and the bill on sexual and reproductive rights recently passed by a congressional committee.

"Christian leaders have both a political and moral obligation to safeguard the laws of nature and of God. Failure in this duty is a betrayal of public trust and an open defiance of your Faith," said CBCP's pastoral letter dated Feb. 18 that would be read this week in all Catholic parishes nationwide.

The Catholic opposes artificial means of family planning and abortion rights—among the family-related issues enunciated by Pope John Paul II in his encyclical Humanae Vitae.

The letter, signed by CBCP president and Davao Archbishop Fernando Capalla, told government leaders and lawmakers that "a well-formed Christian conscience does not permit you to write or support measures which contradict the basic rights of families and the fundamental imperatives of faith and moral."

The bishops said the program was not simply what it claims to be—"an information for maternal health." The program, they said, "violates and mocks the privacy and autonomy of couples and families" and "desecrates the sanctity of marriage and family life."

The health department's Ligtas-Buntis program, which was launched yesterday, would deploy some 15,000 health workers nationwide to distribute different contraceptive items.

Couples would also be interviewed by the health workers, who would map and make a master list of families after house-to-house and personal surveys on the fertility control methods they use. Sexual education would also be taught.

According to the bishops, however, spouses should build their families "on the rock of Christian generosity and discernment."

"Your right to found a family is rooted on your Christian responsibly and freedom of religious belief, together with the right to act according to that belief. That freedom may not be breached," the letter said.

It added: "Responsible parenthood goes beyond simply providing for a family's material needs. While we must preach about providing bread, there is no substitute for first preaching about the higher truth about man."

The Catholic health workers, the bishops said, "have the right to conscientious objection" and that it was both their civic right and Christian duty to insist on it.

As for the sexual and reproductive rights bill approved at the committee level in the House of Representatives, the CBCP said it was "unjust, arbitrary and unreasonable (piece of) legislation."

The measure, if approved, would fine or imprison parents, spouses and health professionals who impede "sexual and reproductive rights." It would also create a program for fertility control by encouraging the limitation of family to two children and gives incentives to two-child families.

NPAs threaten to attack US troops

US downplays warning

COMMUNIST guerrillas warned American troops taking part in annual joint military exercises with Filipino forces that they would be attacked if they strayed into rebel-influenced areas of the country.

Some 300 American and 650 Filipino troops began joint training exercises in Rizal province on Sunday.

"This is a warning to the (President Macapagal-) Arroyo regime and American soldiers that any form of armed incursion into the territories of the revolutionary movement in the province of Rizal will trigger an equal response from the forces" of the New People's Army (NPA), the rebels said in a statement.

The communist NPA, which is on the US state department's "foreign terrorist organization" blacklist, killed several US servicemen north of Manila in the late 1980s.

Two NPA members are serving life terms for the murder of an American military adviser in Manila in 1989.

But United States Embassy deputy chief of mission Joseph Mussomeli downplayed the attack, saying that while security measures were in place, the NPA warning was largely an empty threat.

"We are always careful. We always have some security, but we think it is mostly just talk," Mussomeli told reporters after a ceremony opening the annual "Balikatan" (shoulder-to-shoulder) exercise involving US and Philippine troops.

"The NPA always expresses its worry and fear [that] our troops [will] come into areas they consider theirs," he said.

"There's no concern for us going there," Mussomelli said.

Mussomelli said the US troops would help 650 Philippine soldiers build schools, roads and bridges and provide medical, dental and veterinary services to tens of thousands of people in Quezon and Laguna provinces.

Aside from the war exercises, the troops also were expected to help deliver aid to the mountains of Quezon, one of the provinces worst hit by successive storms and typhoons late last year. More than 1,000 people died in landslides and flash floods.

The troops will construct new school buildings and provide medical and dental services to communities in nearby Laguna province, officials said.

Communist guerrillas have said the relief operations could be a pretext by US troops to intrude into rural NPA strongholds in the two provinces to spy on—and help crush—the Marxist rebel movement.

They said they were "ready to fight US combat troops that help the (military) trample on human rights and kill Filipinos."

"It's shocking that an organization that claims to be supporting the poor and the oppressed is upset that we are going to help the poor and the oppressed," he said.

The US military has scaled back its role in this year's exercise and for the first time since 2000, when the war games resumed after a break of six years, there will be no large-scale mock battles and amphibious landings.

Last year, about 2,500 US troops took part.

The US Embassy said Sunday the joint exercises would strive to improve the two armies' capabilities "against armed attacks, including threats from terrorist groups, as well as readiness to respond to natural disasters."

US military spokesperson Captain Dennis Williams said US forces were busy with relief efforts in tsunami-affected areas in the Indian Ocean and in operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The United States has had a long relationship with the Philippines, first as a colonial ruler after the defeat of former colonial power Spain in 1898 and then as an ally who made use of the country's air and naval bases during the Cold War.

Besides the annual exercises, US soldiers routinely train Philippine troops in the South but they are prevented by the Philippine constitution from combat.

Cooperation in recent years has focused on ways to defeat regional Islamic militants, homegrown Muslim rebels and the NPA.

The 8,000-strong NPA, fighting an insurgency since 1969 in which at least 40,000 people have been killed, has issued similar warnings before previous exercises.

Armed Forces chief of staff Gen. Efren Abu said the civic work would be "like fighting terrorism on another front." Communist insurgents have staged numerous attacks on military and police targets in both of the impoverished provinces.

The joint military exercises are allowed under a Mutual Defense Treaty and another agreement that authorizes temporary visits of US troops to the Philippines, a former US colony.

Defense Secretary Avelino Cruz, however, said that the two longtime military allies are considering a third accord that would help them jointly deal with cross-border crimes, including terrorism. He didn't elaborate.

The guerrillas, estimated by the military to number 8,240, have been waging a Marxist insurrection for more than three decades and are on US and European Union lists of terrorist organizations.

The rebels suspended the last round of Norwegian-hosted peace talks in August to protest Manila's refusal to pressure the United States and the European Union to remove them from such lists.

Reports from AFP, Reuters and AP

ARMED Forces Chief of Staff Gen. Efren Abu, Defense Secretary Avelino Cruz and US Embassy deputy chief of mission Joseph Mussomeli lock arms to mark the opening of the RP-US Balikatan exercises at Camp Aguinaldo Monday. JOAN BONDOC

Senate freezes proposed bill to fight terror

By Michael Lim Ubac
and Christine O. Avendaño

SENATE President Franklin Drilon effectively archived the proposed antiterror law when he announced yesterday that it could not be calendared for plenary deliberations for the next four months.

"Now, until we go on a Lenten break, and even probably until June of this year, our calendar will be devoted to the economic measures that the President and the Ledac (Legislative Executive Development Advisory Council) had agreed to be in the legislative calendar," said Drilon.

Drilon told reporters that the antiterror bill was one of the measures lawmakers had agreed to take up when the Senate and the House of Representatives crafted their legislative agenda for the 13th Congress.

"But as the President said in her State of The Nation address, she wanted us to devote the first year of this Congress on measures that can resolve the economic problems of this country," the Senate chief said.

He could not say when the chamber could tackle the antiterror bill.

Drilon recalled that it was former Sen. Robert Barbers who principally authored Senate Bill No. 2540, otherwise known as an act to define and penalize acts of terrorism and for other purposes, in the 12th Congress.

"It was the subject of a very extensive debate. We were not able to pass it because of the very contentious provisions of the proposed measure," Drilon said.

When the 13th Congress opened in July last year, Sen. Panfilo Lacson re-filed the antiterror bill under Senate Bill No. 831.

US diplomat twits RP media over 'travel advisory'

By Alcuin Papa

AN OFFICIAL of the United States Embassy in Manila twitted Philippine media yesterday for reporting on the "warning" issued by the US state department urging American citizens to be "cautious" while in the country after the bomb attacks in three cities on Valentine's Day.

US Embassy deputy chief mission Joseph Mussomeli told reporters in Camp Aguinaldo that the warning was a mere "public announcement" and not a "travel advisory."

"They are not travel advisories. They are public announcements and we have that on any country in the world. The difference is that the Philippine media make [them] headlines. No other country in the world makes it a headline so it is not a big deal," Mussomeli said.

He said travel advisories were very rare.

The website of the state department says that a travel warning is issued when it decides, "based on all relevant information, to recommend that Americans avoid travel to a certain country."

A public announcement is issued by the state department "to disseminate information about terrorist threats and other relatively short-term and/or transnational conditions posing significant risks to the security of American travelers."

"They (public announcements) are made when there is a specific threat that cannot be countered. In the past, public announcements have been issued to deal with short-term coups, violence by terrorists and anniversary dates of specific terrorist events," the website said.

The state department also compiles a list of countries which it had issued travel warnings for American citizens. The list includes Cote d'Iviore, Guyana, Algeria, Indonesia, Libya and Bosnia-Herzegovina. The Philippines is not on this list.

The state department also issued public announcements on countries like Venezuela to warn American citizens of the flooding in that country, and Nepal to warn Americans against civil unrest in the Himalayan country.

Mussomeli explained that US Embassy officials led by US Ambassador to Manila Francis Ricciardone had encouraged their relatives and friends to come to Manila.

"We certainly feel very safe here. We would not have our parents and our children visit if it was really that dangerous," he said.

He encouraged American tourists to visit the country. "We welcome them (Americans) to come and we believe, I believe, that they keep increasing. The Philippines is a great place to visit," he said.

However, Mussomeli said that the threat of terror attacks was still real in the Philippines.

"There's always a threat of terrorist attack but there is no specific, credible information that there are any in the offing. Where the terrorists would strike and when is anyone's guess. It could be in the Philippines, it could be in the United States, it could be anywhere," Mussomeli said.

Last Friday, the state department urged its citizens in the country "to exercise caution and maintain heightened security awareness" following the bombings on Feb. 14 that killed eight people and injured some 150 others.

The al Qaida-linked Abu Sayyaf Group, which the US has listed as a foreign terror organization, has claimed responsibility for the attacks.

The announcement caught the ire of Malacañang, which is banking on tourist arrivals for much-needed revenues.

Presidential spokesperson Ignacio Bunye lashed out at the advisory, saying it was an "overkill or overreaction."

Gov't moves to keep 41% stake in San Miguel

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

THE GOVERNMENT will not allow its 41-percent stake in San Miguel Corp. (SMC), the country's largest food and beverage firm, to be diluted when SMC offers $300 million worth of additional shares to the public in the next few months.

The company has yet to announce the date when it will issue additional shares.

SMC is raising additional capital through a stock rights offering as part of its aggressive expansion into the Asia-Pacific region. It has set the record date for the stock rights offering on March 7, which means stockholders on the company's stock and transfer books as of that time will qualify for the offering.

Existing shareholders are given the right to first subscribe to the shares through what is called a preemptive right.

Should the existing shareholders, including government, decide not to exercise their right, their shares will get diluted if other shareholders choose to increase their respective stakes.

House committee chair on economic affairs and Albay Rep. Jose Sarte Salceda told reporters in a mining briefing at the Philippine Stock Exchange (PSE) yesterday that he has suggested to Finance Secretary Cesar Purisima for government to tap financial institutions like the Land Bank of the Philippines and Development Bank of the Philippines for funds or possible loans to participate in the stock rights offering of SMC.

Salceda told reporters that Purisima has agreed to the plan.

The government controls 41 percent of SMC—27 percent sequestered by the Presidential Commission on Good Government (PCGG) in behalf of coconut farmers and 6 to 8 percent each owned by the Government Service Insurance System and the Social Security System, respectively.

An additional 20-percent block, controlled by San Miguel's chairman Eduardo Cojuangco, is being contested in the courts by the PCGG.

Sources said that PCGG owns 279.4 million B shares and 445 million A shares in San Miguel. The government block is valued at roughly $2 billion.

At the stock market, Class A shares (that can be bought and sold only by Filipinos) closed at P57.50 while class B shares which can be offered to foreign investors traded yesterday at P80.50.

Salceda said the government wants to keep its 41-percent stake in SMC intact so it can sell this as a block to interested investors.

It will also preserve the value of the coconut farmers' interest in SMC.

"We may be liable (to the coco farmers), (it is) unfair to coco farmers. It is public money in trust for the farmers and suddenly we will not do a good job for the farmers," Salceda told reporters.

Erap foundation exec admits names of donors who gave ₱200M kept secret

By Armand N. Nocum

AN OFFICER of the Erap Muslim Youth Foundation yesterday admitted that the identities of the donors who gave P200 million to the foundation were kept secret even from the board members, bolstering claims by the prosecution that the EMYF was used to launder "jueteng" money.

This was revealed yesterday by Danilo Reyes, 53, acting treasurer of the foundation and 20th witness for the defense in the plunder case against former President Joseph Estrada.

Reyes, an associate professor of the University of the Philippines and one of the five incorporators of EMYF, said that when the P200 million was first reported during a board meeting in "April or May 2000," it was stipulated that "donors remain anonymous."

Edward Serapio, the foundation's legal counsel, told the board that "the donors want to remain anonymous or they will take their money back," Reyes narrated, adding that it was only Serapio who knew their identities.

Serapio is Estrada's co-accused in plunder charges before the Sandiganbayan. He is also charged with allegedly laundering P200 million for the foundation and is out on a P500,000 bail.

The jueteng money reportedly came from former Estrada buddy Ilocos Sur Gov. Luis "Chavit" Singson.

Reyes testified that the money was deposited with the Equitable PCI Bank but he did not know who had made the deposit.

Defense lawyer Cleofe Verzola presented documents which showed that as of May 11, 2001, the bank balance stood at P203,136,931.

"The money is still intact at the Equitable PCI Bank," Reyes said.

According to Special Prosecutor Dennis Villa-Ignacio, Reyes' testimony strengthened the prosecution's claim that the foundation was put up to launder money from the illegal numbers game of jueteng.

"They cannot reveal where the money came from because it came from jueteng. That's why Serapio cannot reveal the source of P200 million," Villa-Ignacio said during a break.

DOJ chief faces sex rap before CA

Gonzalez: Prove it, I'll quit!

By Philip C. Tubeza

AFTER losing the support of the Integrated Bar of the Philippines, Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez has been accused of having an adulterous relationship with one of his staff members before the Commission on Appointments.

In a seven-page affidavit filed with the CA, Jose Roberto Montilla, a former staff member of Gonzalez, said his ex-boss had an "amorous" relationship with Tessie Jamolo, a Sangguniang Kabataan chair in Iloilo, who allegedly got pregnant when Gonzalez was still congressman.

"Almost all the employees in the district office knew of the repeated sexual acts of Sir (Gonzalez) and Tessie every time they had an opportunity to satisfy their adulterous desires," Montilla said.

He claimed the alleged illicit relationship violated the Anti-Sexual Harassment Act of 1995.

However, Gonzalez vehemently denied the accusations, saying that he was ready to resign if these were proven.

"That's nothing. If you can present any credible evidence, I will resign tomorrow. If you can prove that (Jamolo) got pregnant or was hospitalized, I would resign," he said.

Gonzalez said Montilla was a disgruntled former employee who only wanted to get back at him because he did not help Montilla when he was charged for stealing softdrink bottles in a videoke bar.

In an interview with the INQUIRER, Jamolo said she was shocked with the allegations of Montilla.

No kisses, no allowance

"I cried when I heard about it and I never felt so humiliated. I never imagined that he (Montilla) would do this to me," Jamolo, the only girl in a brood of eight, said.

A first year law student, Jamolo, 27, said the allegations have affected her studies and have strained her relationship with her boyfriend.

"I have been an official of our village for 14 years and I have tried to be a model to my fellow youth," she said. Her father Rafael has been village chief for the past 24 years.

Jamolo described as "ridiculous" Montilla's allegation that he saw Gonzalez kiss her several times. She also denied that she received an "allowance" from Gonzalez that was delivered by Montilla at her residence.

She could not explain why Montilla targeted her in his allegations. Jamolo said she worked with him for a short time as co-host of a cable program.

"Maybe he thought he could get to (Gonzalez) by targeting me because our family has been known to be loyal supporters of the former congressman," said Jamolo. "I was just caught in the rift between (Gonzalez) and his political enemies."

She said she is planning to consult her lawyer for possible legal actions against Montilla. She did not immediately file a case against him "because I thought he would still recant his allegations because he knows the truth."

Montilla now reportedly works for Marietta Orleans, head of the league of barangay captains in Iloilo, and a political opponent of Gonzalez. Montilla's affidavit was submitted to the CA in support of Orleans' opposition to Gonzalez's confirmation.

"She (Orleans) is using Montilla to get back at me..." said Gonzalez.

Montilla said he noticed the alleged relationship between Gonzalez and Jamolo, when he started working at the former congressman's office.

He said he saw on several occasions Gonzalez and Jamolo "romancing and petting each other" in the conference room of Gonzalez's office in Iloilo.

"At first, I did not give any importance to their repeated disappearing acts, until I discovered what they were doing in the conference room," Montilla said.

"... I saw and noticed how Tessie loves Sir (Gonzalez), by the way she caressed and tenderly cared for Sir ... Tessie attends to the food of Sir when (Gonzalez's wife) is not in Iloilo," he added.

Gonzalez's wife, Pacita Trinidad Gonzalez, is a former congresswoman from Zambales.

"Every time (Pacita) arrives from Manila, Tessie does not go to the district office, perhaps because she felt (Pacita) suspects her," Montilla said.

"(Pacita) even threatened that the moment she learns of Tessie's seeing Sir and going to his office, she will splash acid on her face," he added.

However, Jamolo allegedly continued seeing Gonzalez when his wife was away, Montilla said. *With a report from Nestor P. Burgos, PDI Visayas Bureau*

No walk in the park

By Christine O. Avendaño

IT WILL not be a walk in the park for Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez when he faces the Commission on Appointments next month.

Sen. Panfilo Lacson, who chairs the CA subcommittee on justice, said yesterday that Gonzalez had "a lot of explaining" to do with at least three groups voicing opposition to his confirmation.

The groups are the Integrated Bar of the Philippines (IBP), the National Prosecutor's League and a group of the justice secretary's constituents in his home province of Iloilo.

Lacson told reporters the IBP wrote the committee a letter opposing Gonzalez's confirmation, citing two statements the latter made in the media.

Gonzalez was scored for admitting that he was appointed justice secretary as a reward for safeguarding the votes of President Macapagal-Arroyo during the canvassing of presidential votes in May last year.

The IBP also criticized Gonzalez for "floating to the media" information on the petition for parole of convicted rapist Romeo Jalosjos, a former colleague in Congress.

NEWSBRIEFS

UN expert says Catholic Church an ally vs AIDS

THE CATHOLIC Church could actually be an ally in the prevention of the spread of the deadly AIDS virus in the Philippines and should not be regarded as an obstacle in the campaign because of its opposition to the use of condoms, the United Nations' (UN) leading HIV/AIDS expert said yesterday. "The debate has focused on that piece of latex. I think it's wrong to reduce the debate to condom," Dr. Peter Piot, chief of the Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and UN undersecretary, said at a press conference held at the Asian Development Bank office in Ortigas. Piot, who has been the UNAIDS executive director since its inception in 1995, said that the Catholic Church can help both in raising the level of awareness of its faithful and in providing care and comfort to those already afflicted with the disease. ***Nikko Dizon***

Senator trains guns on Transco chopper

NEWS of an impending purchase of a brand new, twin-engine helicopter by energy officials yesterday enraged senators who promptly sought an inquiry. Sen. Ramon Magsaysay Jr. filed Senate Resolution No. 189 seeking to block the purchase of the helicopter worth P336 million by the National Transmission Commission (Transco). He said the transaction, which was approved by a board resolution of Transco, was "unconscionable" and violated the government's austerity program." ***Michael Lim Ubac***

Court says GMA can't ban Subic car imports

THE COURT of Appeals has ruled that President Macapagal-Arroyo's ban on the importation of used vehicles was unconstitutional. In a 31-page ruling on Feb. 14, the appellate court's 4th Division upheld an Olongapo court ruling which nullified Executive Order 156, which prohibited the importation of used motor vehicles, saying that it had no legal basis. "There is no law granting the President of the Republic of the Philippines authority to prohibit the importation of used motor vehicles. Consequently, we rule that Executive Order No. 156 has no constitutional and statutory basis and is therefore, invalid," said the decision penned by Justice Perlita Tria Tirona. The court said the executive department could not claim that Ms Arroyo issued the order based on her exercise of police power. ***Philip C. Tubeza***

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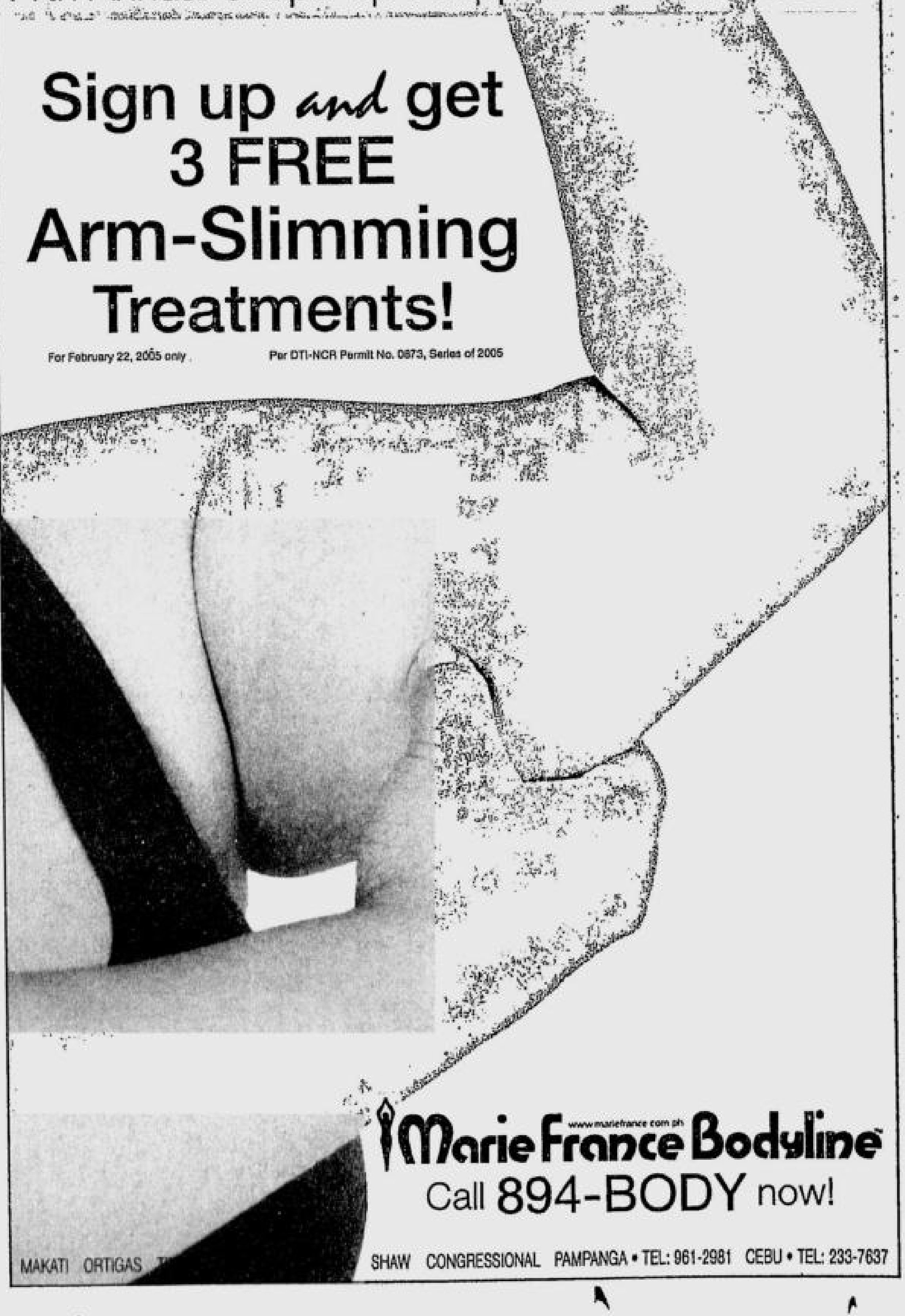

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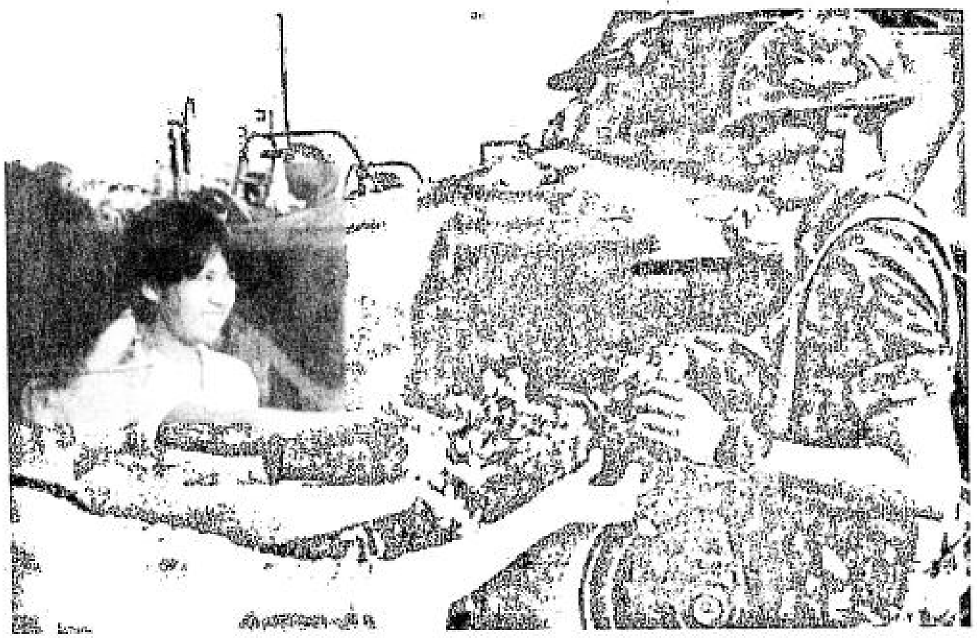
Kaysaya natin noon. Kaytamis maging malaya.

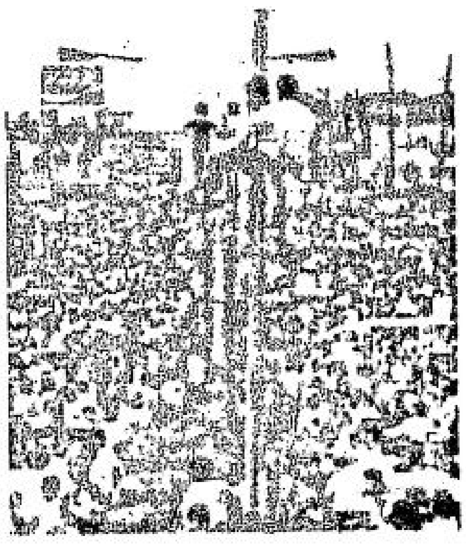


Ngunit noong 2001, kinailangan nating bumalik sa EDSA. Pagkat tila hindi pa ganap ang ating tagumpay noong 1986. Ang katiwalian ay talamak pa. Muli, sa pamamagitan ng sama-samang pagkilos, kinailangan nating alisin sa puwesto ang isa pang Pangulo ng bansa dahil sa katiwalian.

Ganitong araw noon, 19 taon na ang nakararaan, nang nagsimula tayong magtipon-tipon sa EDSA. Ganitong araw noon nang sinimulang inukit ng sambayanang Pilipino, na kailanman ay di mabubura, ang kabayanihan na naging huwaran ng pagkilos ng mamamayan ng maraming bansang lumaban at nagpabagsak din sa mga tiwaling diktadura.

Ngunit bakit tila may kulang pa? Bakit tila hindi pa ganap ang tagumpay ng dalawang pagkilos natin sa EDSA?

Pagkat hanggang ngayon ay naririyan pa ang katiwalian. Pagkat hanggang ngayon ay naririyan pa ang salot na patuloy na namumuwisan sa dugo at pawis ng mamamayan.

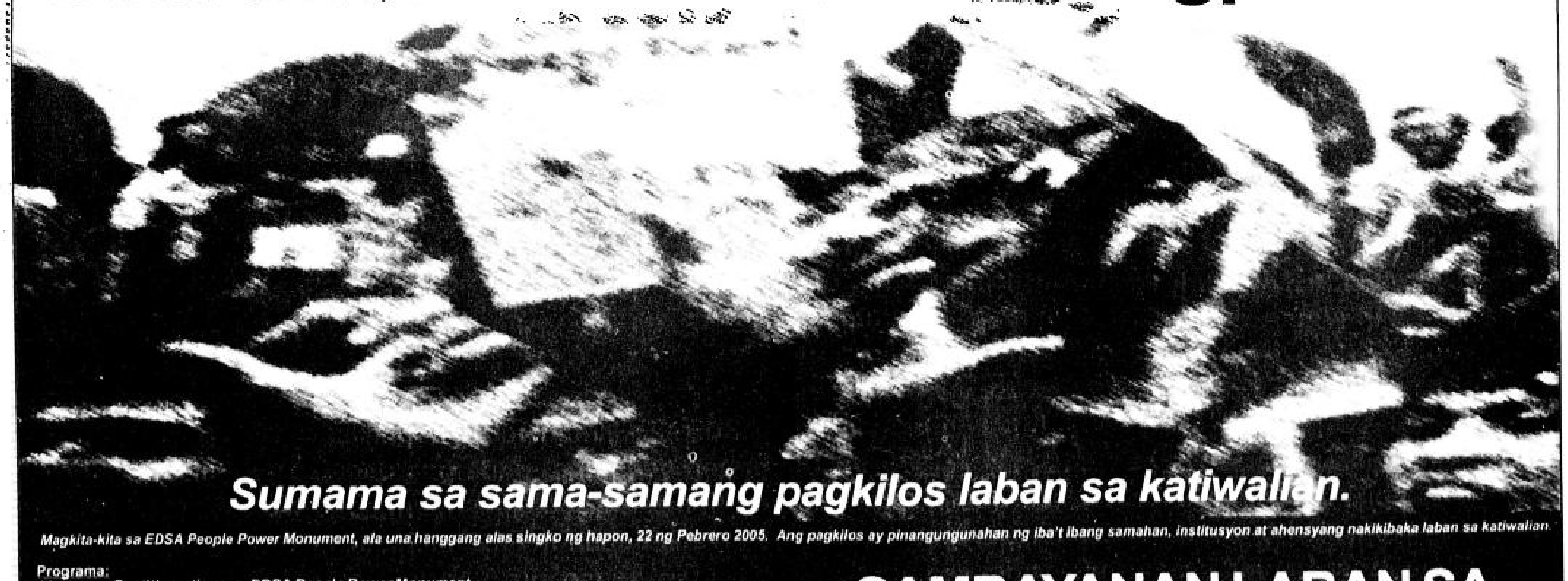


Mas madaling magpabagsak ng diktadura, kung tutuusin. Ngunit, ang totoo, alisin man natin sa puwesto ang bawat Pangulo ng bansa, hindi natin mapapalis ang katiwalian hanggang ugat nito'y di natin mapapatay. At, nakalulungkot aminin, ang ugat nito'y tila malalim na ang kawing sa mismong kultura natin.

Kailangan nating magsama-samang muli. Halina, halinang buhayin muli ang ningas na minsang nagbuklod-buklod sa atin, hanggang sa muli itong maglagablab. Pagtulung-tulungan natin. Pagkaisahan natin. Ang pagbabago ay dapat magsimula sa mamamayan, hindi sa pamahalaan lamang.

Halina. Halinang ituloy at tapusin and laban ng Edsa.

Beat the odds. Katiwalian sugpuin na!



Sumama sa sama-samang pagkilos laban sa katiwalian.

Magkita-kita sa EDSA People Power Monument, ala una hanggang alas singko ng hapon, 22 ng Pebrero 2005. Ang pagkilos ay pinangungunahan ng iba't ibang samahan, institusyon at ahensyang nakikibaka laban sa katiwalian.

Programa:
1 hapon : Pagtitipon-tipon sa EDSA People Power Monument
1:30 : Panalangin, Pag-awit ng Pambansang Awit, Pambungad na pananalita
2:00 : Mensahe ng iba'ibang sektor laban sa katiwalian
3:00 : Pagkilala sa mga samahan, institusyon at ahensyang lumalaban sa katiwalian
3:15 : Talumpati ng Pangulo
4:30 : Pagbasa ng Deklarasyon ng EDSA Laban sa Katiwalian
4:45 : Sama-samang pag-awit ng Bayan Ko
5-7 gabi : Pagtatanghal ng iba't ibang artista

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SAMBAYANAN LABAN SA KATIWALIAN

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High security costs peril shipping firms

A FERRY firm targeted by the deadliest terrorist attack in the Philippines said yesterday that security costs had skyrocketed and could drive weaker players out of the business.

Nearly a year after the bombing that claimed more than 100 lives, the threat of terrorism looms large even after the company has lumped substantial sums into improving security, chief executive Ava Engel said.

A bomb on Feb. 27, 2004, ripped through the company's Superferry 14, carrying nearly a thousand passengers and crew, as it sailed out of Manila Bay.

The Abu Sayyaf, a militant Islamic group linked by Manila and Washington to al-Qaida and engaged in kidnappings in the South, claimed responsibility.

"That accident really had an impact for all the companies" involved in the sea transportation industry, Engel told a news conference.

"Insurance costs have gone up tremendously for us, by several hundred percent," she said, while crippling tourism and "shooing away our potential customers."

Superferry, a unit of a conglomerate controlled by the Basque-Filipino Aboitiz family, was confident the company would stay in business even if subjected to another attack.

"For an incident like this to happen in an organization that does not have the intrinsic strength to weather this, this kind of disaster may sink a shipping company," Engel said.

Erden Ferrer, safety and corporate officer for sister firm Aboitiz Jebsen which takes care of the ferry fleet's security, said the Superferry vessels, which can carry more than 2,000 passengers and weigh nearly 20,000 tons, were a "high-profile target."

"The latest information we have is that the bad guys are now learning to navigate the vessels, how to run the vessels," Ferrer said.

Asked if he meant terrorist groups or pirates, Ferrer said that "to us, terrorists and pirates are the same."

Armed "sea marshals" deployed by the government now go on board all trips conducted by its 11-ship fleet of ferries. *AFP*

POLICE REVAMP

PNP sacks controversial CIDG chief in botched antiterror raid

By Christian Esguerra

THE CONTROVERSIAL officer-in-charge of the powerful Criminal Investigation and Detection Group has been sacked in the latest top-level revamp at the Philippine National Police.

Senior Supt. Rodolfo "Boogie" Mendoza, heavily criticized for last month's raid of an Islamic prayer room in Manila, was transferred to the Directorate for Investigation and Detective Management where he will serve as executive officer.

Chief Supt. Ricardo Dapat, erstwhile Maritime Group director and known protégé of former PNP chief Leandro Mendoza, took over the sought-after CIDG post.

Unlike in the CIDG, Mendoza would be dealing with administrative matters at the DIDM. The CIDG is a key PNP support unit, handling high-profile crimes.

Mendoza, a member of Philippine Military Academy Class 1978, had been slammed for the January raid which allegedly preyed on innocent Muslims at the Islamic Information Center on Taft Avenue.

BOOGIE MENDOZA JR.: From operations to administrative work. JESS YUSON

All but two of the 17 suspected terrorists arrested were released for lack of evidence.

Replacing Dapat at the Maritime Group is Chief Supt. Reynor Gonzales, according to a statement issued yesterday by outgoing PNP chief Director General Edgar Aglipay.

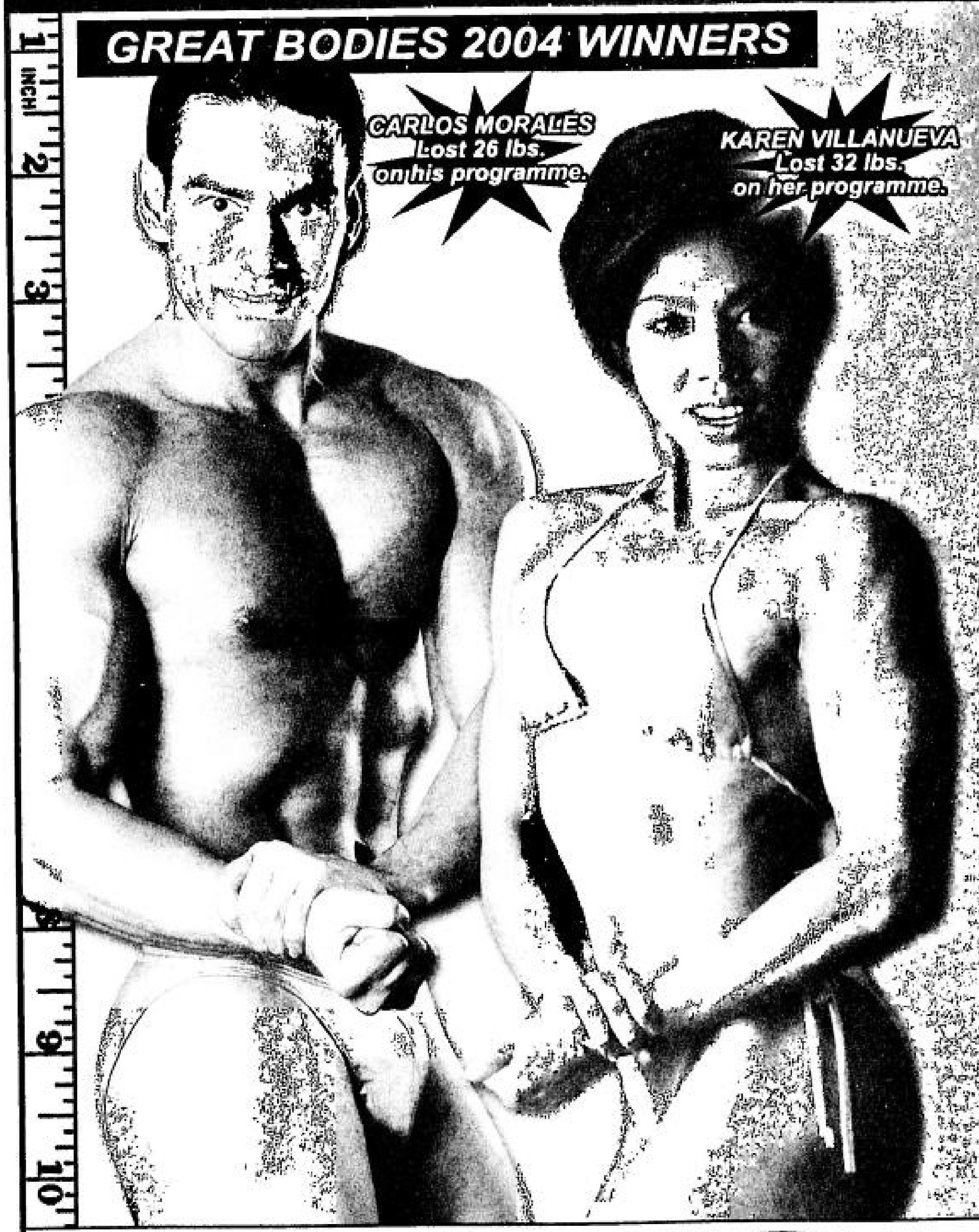
Dapat's deputy will be Senior Supt. Luizo Ticman.

The revamp was triggered by the retirement today of Chief Supt. George Alino, Western Visayas police office director.

Alino will be replaced by Chief Supt. Doroteo Reyes II, erstwhile DIDM head. Taking over Reyes' post is Chief Supt. Marcelo Ele Jr., a former DIDM deputy during the time of retired Director Eduardo Matillano.

The new DIDM deputy is Senior Supt. Charlemagne Alejandrino, former CIDG deputy chief before he was placed on "floating status" a few months before the newest reshuffle at the PNP.

Also part of the revamp was the appointment of Chief Supt. Wilfredo Dulay as Legal Service director and Senior Supt. Napoleon delos Santos as executive officer of the directorate for plans.



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A CRY FOR JUST AND LASTING PEACE IN SULU

We are civil society organizations working together for the development of Basilan, Sulu, and Tawi-Tawi. We are alarmed and concerned with the rising armed hostilities in Sulu, and strongly condemn the loss of innocent civilian lives, not only in Sulu, but also in the cities of Davao, General Santos, and Makati.

We call for a swift end to the hostilities to prevent a protracted armed conflict that will certainly aggravate the poverty conditions existing in Sulu, characterized by high poverty incidence of 63%, low life expectancy of 52.3 years, very low incomes, low educational attainment (e.g., only 1 out of 10 finish high school), and a lack of access to basic services (e.g., 7 out of 10 families have no access to potable water). The Sulu Sultanate was a thriving political entity recognized by sovereign nations as early as the 14th century. Today, Sulu is the poorest province in the Philippines.

When conflict is rooted in social injustice and inequity, we cannot rely on purely legal and military solutions. Violence begets more violence.

We, therefore, call on ALL concerned parties to recognize and uphold conflict resolution and transformation mechanisms that could build trust, and seriously address the deeper causes of unrest to heal societal divides and prevent future violence. We commit ourselves to assist in a comprehensive peace-building process grounded on law and order, social justice, good governance, and development.

We remain steadfast in helping the provincial and municipal governments, social institutions, and communities of Basilan, Sulu, and Tawi-Tawi pursue these common objectives in a partnership of joint accountability and transparency. This process will require the involvement of traditional and religious leaders, and the people who have a stake in their future, and can provide the relevant cultural and societal perspectives.

In the last eight months, *Pagtabangan BaSulTa*, working with the various stakeholders in the three provinces, has adopted a common framework of human security. It has identified priority programs, projects, and activities that address critical issues of good governance and people participation, basic development needs, and peace and social justice. It is on the verge of implementing these with considerable human and financial resources, with the communities contributing their social capital. Violence can only reverse this process of authentic development.

The people and local institutions of Sulu are taking concrete steps to overcome the extreme deprivation and powerlessness that have gripped them for so long. Their efforts should not be thwarted. We urgently call for the swift end to armed hostilities, and we call on all people of goodwill to join us in this collaborative effort to transform Basilan, Sulu, and Tawi-Tawi, this poorest sub-region of our country, into a sanctuary of peace and development, where human rights are respected, basic human needs are met, and justice reigns.

16 February 2005

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PAID ADVERTISEMENT

Controversy stalks ex-solon

By Luige A. del Puerto
Metro

DENNIS Roldan is not exactly immune to controversy, but nothing quite like what he is facing now has hit him before.

Even fellow actors were shocked at police allegations that the former congressman from Quezon City was part of a kidnap group involved in the abduction of a Chinese-Filipino for a reported ransom of P250 million.

The boy was rescued at the weekend and no money was paid, police said.

Rez Cortez, an actor who used to play with Roldan in the Star Olympics, was completely taken aback by the actor's arrest.

"We used to play basketball together during the Star Olympics," Cortez said in an interview.

"I was surprised at what happened. I could not believe it. He seems not capable of doing that," he said.

Cortez said as far as he knew, Roldan was better off financially than other actors.

"If we are talking about money, I know he has a lot," Cortez said.

"He has a farm in Zambales, and he has businesses," he said, adding Roldan was a car dealer.

He said Roldan also had more film projects on the pipe line compared to others—at least before the film industry suffered a slump.

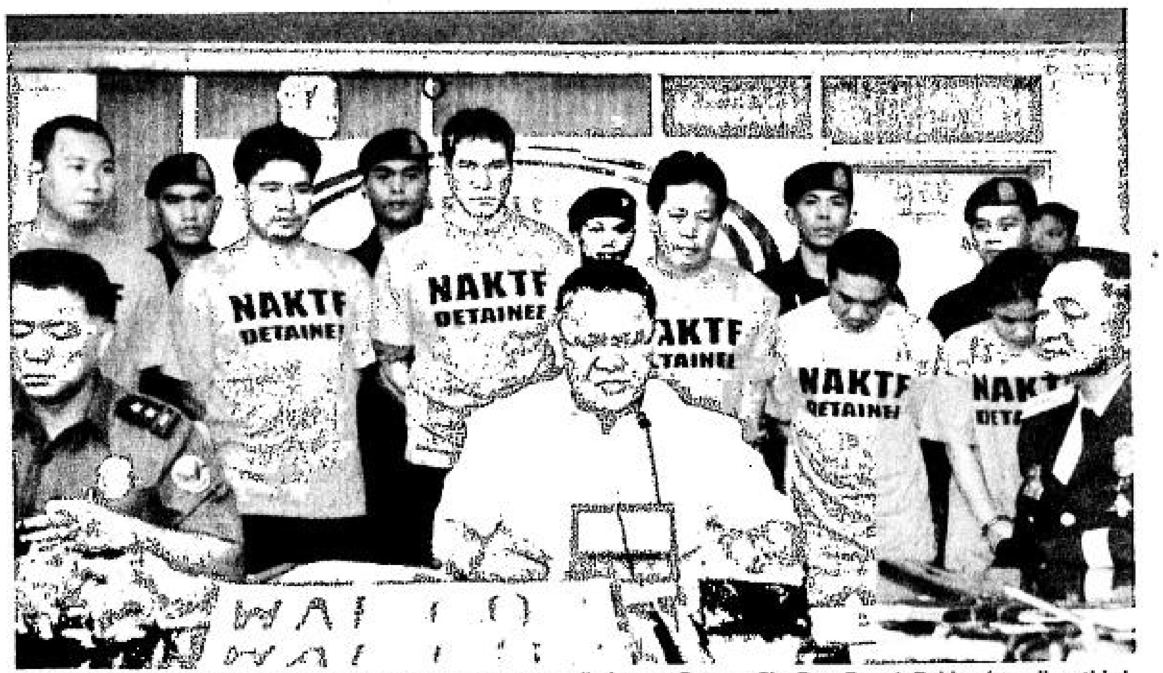
But Roldan had figured in controversies in the past.

Five years ago, the former legislator allegedly stopped a police raid on gambling suspects in Baguio City, according to records in the INQUIRER Archives.

The police said they had chanced upon about a dozen known gambling suspects in a local hotel lobby in that city as they were about to toss out the first winning numbers of that day's lottery.

But Roldan—Mitchell Gumabao in real life—allegedly stopped the policemen. He was carrying an authorization letter from a Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp. official designating him as a Bingo-2-Ball "sales agent" for Baguio and Benguet.

The police said no arrests were made because several officers were cowed by Roldan's presence, according to the INQUIRER Archives.



INTERIOR Secretary Angelo Reyes (center) presents to media former Quezon City Rep. Dennis Roldan (standing, third from left) and six other suspects in the kidnapping of a 3-year-old Chinese-Filipino boy. Flanking Reyes are Director Robert Delfin (left) of the Police Anti-Crime Emergency Response and Police Director General Edgar Aglipay. JOAN BONDOC

Ex-solon's partner...

From page A1

wealthy," Delfin added.

Roldan's lawyer, Salvador Panelo, accused the police of torturing his client, but officials denied the allegation.

Delfin said Pacer members had already determined the location of Wang who, he said, was hiding "just within Metro Manila."

He said Wang was Roldan's girlfriend but did not elaborate.

Me-Ann Dy, president of the anticrime group Movement for the Restoration of Peace and Order, also said Roldan brought out Wang's name during interrogation.

Mother shocked

"Her name came out in the investigation, it was mentioned by Dennis Roldan," she told reporters.

Dy said the allegation that Wang was involved had taken the boy's mother by surprise.

"They had been grade school friends," Dy said. "She [the mother] was in denial. It took some time before she was able to accept that a friend could do that to her."

Leading anticrime watchdog Teresita Ang-See described Wang as in her 30s and said that as far as she knew, she was a school mate of the kidnapped boy's mother in a Chinese institution.

No bail recommended

Roldan and six other alleged members of the gang were charged with kidnapping for ransom and illegal possession of firearms. State prosecutors Pablo Formaran and Irwin Maraya recommended no bail.

That means the suspects will be detained at the PNP custodial center in Crame throughout the legal proceedings, said Interior Secretary Angelo Reyes.

"It should not matter whether you're a former congressman or government official," Reyes said, when asked if anyone had tried to intercede in behalf of Roldan, who was a member of Congress from 1992 to 1995.

High standards demanded

Being a former congressman imposes on people like Roldan a "higher standard for respecting the law," Reyes explained.

Besides Roldan, the Pacer arrested Adrian Domingo, Alberto Pagdanganan, Noel San Andres, Rowena Prado, Romeo Orcajada and Octavio Garces, chairperson of Barangay East Kamias in Quezon City.

The 48-year-old Roldan (Mitchell Gumabao in real life) was quiet like his companions throughout the press presentation. Not once did he attempt to speak to deny the allegations.

It was Panelo who did much of the talking.

Torture claims denied

Claiming Roldan had been tortured, he showed reporters two pictures—one suggesting a purported injury behind his client's left ear, and the other showing more alleged injuries on the back.

"He could hardly speak when I visited him. His jaws were swelling," Panelo claimed in a radio interview earlier in the morning.

But Roldan appeared unmarked during the media presentation. His hair was disheveled and there were stubbles in his face.

"They said he had been beaten black and blue [*bugbog sarado*] but now you see that it's not true," Reyes told reporters as Roldan stood behind him.

Enough evidence?

Delfin said Panelo came up with the story in a bid to discredit his men.

But do police really have the goods on Roldan and his companions?

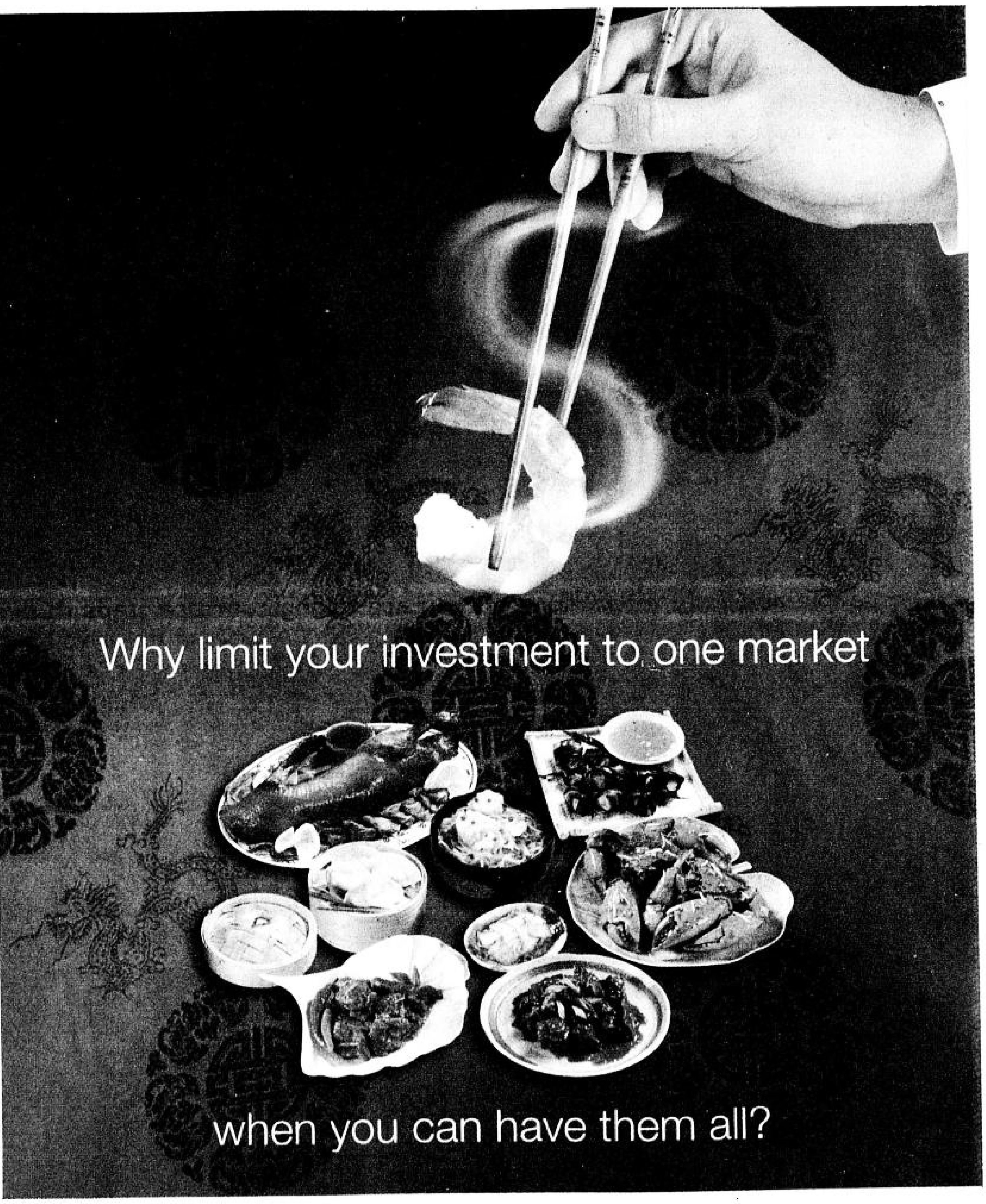
"We have enough body of evidence to clearly show that these people are involved," Reyes said, citing what he said was the testimony of other suspects.

He said investigators were looking into allegations that Roldan and company had also been involved in a previous kidnapping.

Contrary to Panelo's argument, Reyes said Pacer members needed no warrant when they arrested Roldan at his house in Filinvest II, Quezon City, early Saturday morning.

"Hot pursuit operations don't require warrants," he explained.

Malacañang praised the police for their work. *With reports from Christine O. Avendaño and Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.*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The WORLD

Editor Luverne B. Gueco

Half of Russia nuke cache may be lost, says US solon

WASHINGTON—Half of Russian nuclear material is not accounted for and may have found its way into the hands of plotters against the United States, a US senator with access to classified intelligence charged Sunday.

John Rockefeller, vice chair of the Senate intelligence committee, said loose Russian radioactive materials and possibly other components of nuclear weapons made him wonder whether Russia was a greater proliferation threat than North Korea, which has publicly claimed to have a nuclear weapons arsenal.

Members of the committee received last week a detailed classified briefing from Central Intelligence Agency officials on security threats the United States faces.

"In the sense that half of the nuclear materials, pieces and parts of it, are unaccounted for by the Russians—and a lot of them, these places are in rural areas—I think you can... have a real debate as to which is more threatening to the world right now," said the Democratic senator, appearing on the "Fox News Sunday" television program.

The warning came as US President George W. Bush arrived in Europe as part of a fence-mending visit aimed at smoothing over disagreements with allies on the Iraq war and strengthening transatlantic security cooperation, including in nuclear non-proliferation.

Bush is scheduled to discuss this and other issues with his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin, when the two meet in the Slovakian capital of Bratislava on Thursday.

Rockefeller questioned Russia's ability to guard its nuclear arsenal due to widespread corruption in the country.

He insisted that "a lot of those lost nuclear weapons can be out circulating in the terrorist community" and president Putin "ought to be very worried" that these weapons or materials could end up in the hands of Chechen separatists.

The CIA, which monitors proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, declined to comment on the senator's remarks.

Russia has thousands of nuclear warheads and dozens on nuclear production and research facilities handling fissile substances. It was not immediately clear which materials the senator referred to. Calls to his office with requests for clarification remained unanswered on Sunday.

During a Senate hearing last week, Rockefeller read from a yet-to-be publicly released report by the National Intelligence Council, a CIA think tank that analyzed security arrangements at Russian nuclear sites.

Russian officials, the senator quoted the report as saying, have acknowledged that extremist groups have already targeted Russian nuclear weapons storage sites.

Two known attempts by terrorists to reconnoiter such facilities were thwarted in Russia prior to 2001, incidents that prompted Moscow to heighten security throughout its nuclear complex, according to the senator.

"We find it highly unlikely that Russian authorities would have been able to recover all the material reportedly stolen," he read from the report. "We assess that undetected smuggling has occurred, and we are concerned about the total amount of material that could be diverted or stolen in the last 13 years." *AFP*

SANDRA DEE DEAD AT 62

Sandra Dee, the blond beauty who attracted a large teen audience in the 1960s with films such as "Gidget" and "Tammy and the Doctor" (photo taken July 1962 shows her portraying a nurse's helper in the movie) and had a headlined marriage to pop singer Bobby Darin, died Feb. 20. She was 62. AP

VOTED GREATEST PRESIDENT

President Abraham Lincoln poses for a portrait in this undated photo. Lincoln has been named the US nation's greatest president by the American people, according to a recent poll. AP

2 Indonesian journalists freed in Iraq

RAMADI, Iraq—Islamic militants have freed two Indonesian journalists taken hostage last week in a notoriously dangerous part of Iraq, Sunni Muslim authorities and Indonesian official said on Monday.

The two television reporters were freed in Ramadi, a rebel hotspot west of the capital in the so-called Sunni triangle, and were heading straight back to Jordan without passing through Baghdad, the sources said.

"The two Indonesians have been freed and will be transferred to the headquarters of the committee in Baghdad, where they will have the choice of going to their embassy or leaving Iraq," said a member of the Committee of Muslim Scholars, the country's leading Sunni organization.

"They have decided to leave Iraq and not go to their embassy in Baghdad. They are on the road to the Jordanian border," said Sheikh Hamed Dulaimi, from the same organization.

The Indonesian foreign ministry in Jakarta confirmed the release of Indonesian reporter Meutya Hafid and cameraman Budiyanto, who work for Metro TV news channel.

"Our embassy officials in Iraq are now handling the immediate return of the two," spokesperson Lutfi Rauf said.

A previously unknown Islamist group, the Jaish al-Mujahedeen, or Army of Islamic Warriors, claimed the kidnapping.

The group said it freed the journalists "after being assured about their identity, and offers its apologies to the Indonesian people," according to a statement reported by Dubai-based Al-Arabiya.

As the Indonesians were on their way home, news emerged of the kidnapping of an Iraqi journalist in the northern city of Mosul.

"Raeda Wazzan was kidnapped by armed men in the Maidan district in the centre of Mosul, with her 10-year-old son," on Sunday, said Iraqia television channel regional director Ghazi Faysal.

The Indonesians went missing last Tuesday as they drove from Jordan to Baghdad. Most foreign journalists now fly into Baghdad from Amman as the land route from Jordan is deemed too dangerous.

The hostages were last seen on Al-Jazeera television flanked by gunmen who demanded that Indonesia explain their presence in Iraq.

Speaking on Metro TV, the cameraman's wife and the journalist's mother reacted to the news with joy. AFP

Spain votes a resounding yes to EU constitution

MADRID—Spaniards gave a resounding seal of approval to the new European constitution in a Sunday referendum, with nearly four in five of those casting ballots backing the text, final official results showed.

Spain was the first of 10 EU states called upon to give the proposed constitution its popular backing, with the remaining 15 member states of the bloc, including the largest nation, Germany, preferring parliamentary ratification.

Spanish Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero said his compatriots had shown their fellow EU citizens the way ahead after 76.73 percent of the 42.32 percent of the electorate who voted cast ballots voting in favor, according to interior ministry returns based on 100 percent of ballots counted.

"Our vote is a message to our fellow EU citizens who were awaiting our decision. Today Europe won, the EU constitution won, Spain won," Zapatero said, inviting neighboring EU states "to follow Spain's path."

Earlier, casting his own ballot, he said a vote in favor would mean "a more united and a stronger Europe."

In theory at least, all 25 states have to back the text, designed to streamline decision-making in the expanding European Union, before it can come into effect.

The level of turnout of more than 14 million voters outstripped analysts' forecasts which had feared a showing of below 40 percent.

Nonetheless, the turnout was the lowest in any vote since the restoration of democracy following the death of military dictator General Francisco Franco in 1975, prompting opposition parties to dub the result a slap in the face for Zapatero's Socialist government. *AFP*

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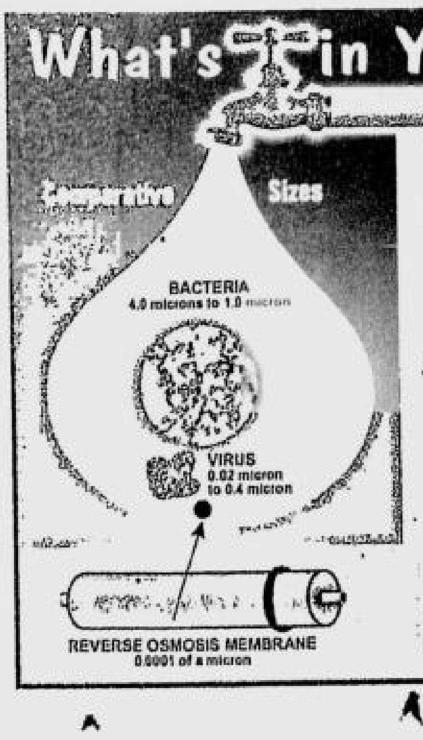

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Calls mount for Togo leader to step down

LOME—Togo's leader looked increasingly isolated on Sunday after African nations cut ties and international calls grew for the new president, installed by the army on his father's death, to step down.

Faure Gnassingbe, son of Africa's longest-serving leader Gnassingbe Eyadema, was named president by the military just hours after his father's death two weeks ago. The constitution and the electoral code were amended to legitimize the move.

African and world leaders described the succession as a coup and on Saturday, the Economic Community of West African States (Ecowas) suspended Togo, imposed an arms embargo and banned the former French colony's leaders from travelling in the region.

The 53-member African Union (AU), currently chaired by West African heavyweight Nigeria, followed suit. AU Commission spokesperson, Adam Thiam, said on Sunday its peace and security council would meet on Feb. 24 to impose sanctions on Togo.

Togo said it was considering a response.

"We don't like to take hasty decisions, but we will react either with a declaration or directly with actions," said Togo's Communication Minister Pitang Tchalla on Sunday.

"For the moment, we are thinking about it," he said.

Gnassingbe is also under pressure at home, where at least 10,000 people demonstrated in the capital Lome on Saturday in the largest protest so far against his rule.

The international outcry came despite a pledge by Gnassingbe on Friday that he would hold presidential elections in 60 days.

However, he indicated he did not intend to step down beforehand.

Under the original constitution, the head of the national assembly, Fambare Ouattara Natchaba, was supposed to take over on Eyadema's death, pending elections in 60 days. *Reuters*

VENERATING A MARTYR

An Iranian young woman prays during a religious ceremony to commemorate Imam Hussein north of Tehran Feb. 20. Imam Hussein, "leader of the martyrs" and grandson of Prophet Mohammad was killed in Karbala in 680 AD. REUTERS

Aussie minister reunited with son after 27 years

SYDNEY—Australian Health Minister Tony Abbott said he was "flabbergasted" to be reunited with the son he gave up for adoption 27 years ago, Especially as they unknowingly worked side-by-side the past three years.

Abbott, first elected to parliament in 1994, said he was contacted late last year by Daniel O'Connor, the infant boy he and his teenage girlfriend gave up for adoption in 1977.

It turned out both men, who bear an uncanny resemblance, worked on opposite sides of the microphone in parliament house, O'Connor as a sound technician for the Australian Broadcasting Corp. and Abbott speaking as a government minister.

"I was flabbergasted, but thought to myself, 'What do you know? Truth is stranger than fiction,'" Abbott told reporters about his Christmas reunion with the son he last held as a five-day-old baby.

Speaking from England where he is traveling, O'Connor told ABC Radio: "I was surprised that I worked in the same building as him. We sat down and had a chat."

O'Connor often worked beside his biological father at news conferences in the sprawling government building in Canberra, even unwittingly fitting microphones to his father's lapel or adjusting his earpiece, the ABC said. *Reuters*

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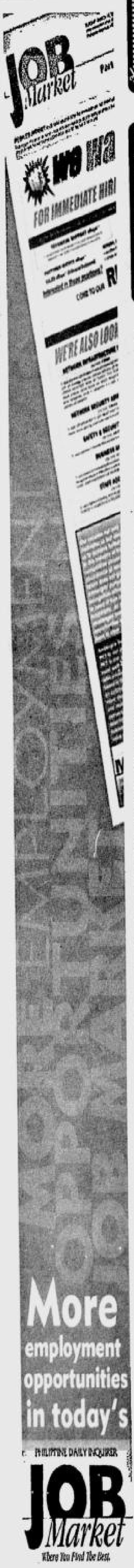

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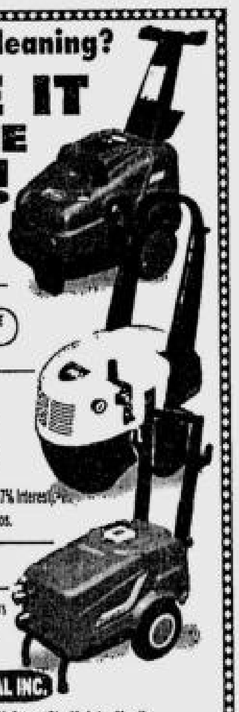

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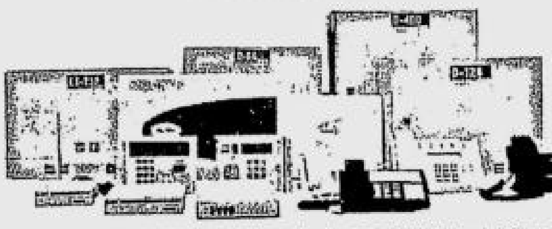

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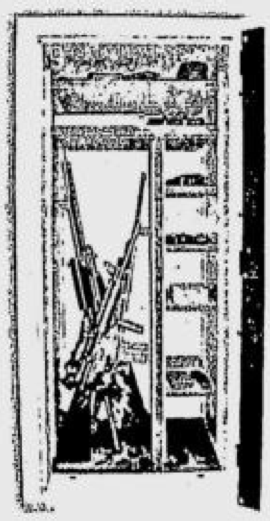

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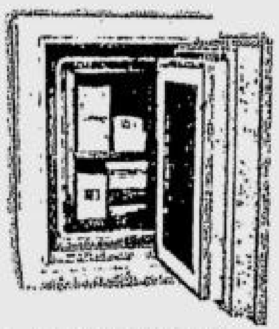

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Israel frees Palestinian prisoners after Gaza vote

JERUSALEM—Israel freed 500 Palestinian prisoners in a good-will gesture Monday, a day after the government gave final approval to a pullout from Gaza and a revised route of the West Bank separation barrier that would encompass at least 6 percent of land claimed by the Palestinians for a future state.

With the historic Cabinet vote, Israel began charting its final borders, bypassing negotiations and angering the Palestinians. Prime Minister Ariel Sharon said the decision to leave Gaza and four settlements in the northern West Bank was the hardest he ever made, but would ensure a better future for Israel.

Sharon signed an order saying Israeli civilians would have to leave the areas slated for evacuation by July 20. Those remaining would be removed by force over a period of two months. Settler leaders have pledged not to leave voluntarily, and security officials are bracing for violent confrontations.

In the West Bank, Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas won the backing of his Fatah movement for a new 24-member Cabinet after a stormy debate, clearing the way for approval of the new ministers by parliament later Monday.

The release of Palestinian prisoners was one of the gestures Sharon agreed to at his summit with Abbas earlier this month in Egypt. Convoys of buses carrying shackled inmates left Israel's desert prison camp of Ketziot around dawn Monday, and arrived at five drop-off points on the edges of the West Bank and Gaza Strip just before noon, military officials said. They were greeted by cheering crowds of relatives.

Those freed had not been involved in attacks on Israelis

Israel has promised to release another 400 prisoners within the next three months. A joint Israeli-Palestinian ministerial committee will decide which prisoners will be released in the second round. Israel is resisting Palestinian demands to free those serving long terms, including for attacks on Israelis.

SOON-TO-BE freed Palestinian prisoners. AP

With Sunday's Cabinet vote, an Israeli government agreed for the first time since capturing the West Bank and Gaza in the 1967 Mideast war to dismantle some of the dozens of Jewish settlements it has built there.

However, in approving the route of the West Bank barrier, Israel acted unilaterally on what was to be a key issue in peace talks with the Palestinians, and signaled it will keep a chunk of prime West Bank land close to Jerusalem, including two large Jewish settlement blocs, Maaleh Adumim and Gush Etzion.

Several Cabinet ministers acknowledged that while the barrier was ostensibly built as a security shield, its route would help determine Israel's final borders with a Palestinian state. Sharon has said he wants to keep large West Bank settlement blocs in any future peace deal with the Palestinians.

Abbas has demanded that construction of the barrier be stopped.

Sharon, a former settler patron and the key proponent of Jewish settlement expansion during most of his political career, said leaving Gaza and parts of the West Bank was difficult. "In all my years of service I have faced hundreds, if not thousands of decisions, some of them matters of life or death, but the decision on the disengagement plan was for me the hardest of all," he said late Sunday.

The Gaza withdrawal won approval from 17 Cabinet ministers, including eight from the moderate Labor Party. Five ministers from Sharon's ruling Likud Party, led by Sharon rival Benjamin Netanyahu, voted against the plan. The Cabinet must still approve each of four evacuation stages, but even opponents said those votes are just a formality.

Even so, Jewish settler leaders said they have not given up. Pinchas Wallerstein, one of the leaders of the council of Jewish settlements, called on supporters to begin "an aggressive and strong struggle," but not engage in violence. AP

Charles-Camilla civil marriage legal, says gov't

LONDON—Britain's chief legal officer said Sunday that the forthcoming civil marriage of Prince Charles and Camilla Parker Bowles would be legal, countering speculation by some legal experts that the wedding might contravene a 19th-century statute.

Last week the British Broadcasting Corp. quoted two constitutional experts as saying civil weddings for members of the royal family were illegal under the 1836 Marriage Act.

But Lord Falconer, the Lord Chancellor, said the government had "considered every aspect of this and taken all the appropriate advice."

"I remain confident that the prince and Mrs. Parker Bowles can marry in a civil ceremony," he added.

Government legal experts say the 1836 legislation was superseded by the 1949 Marriage Act, which does not specifically exclude royalty from civil marriages.

A spokesperson for the prince's Clarence House office said the couple had received legal advice and were confident there was no bar to their marriage.

The heir to the throne and Parker Bowles are due to marry on April 8 at the town hall in Windsor, west of London. The civil ceremony, which will be followed by a blessing led by Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams, is designed in part to allay concerns of Anglican traditionalists.

The Church of England—of which Charles will become titular head when he takes the throne—traditionally frowns on church remarriages for divorcees whose spouses are still alive. AP

SOCIALIST Party leader Jose Socrates REUTERS

Socialists enjoy landslide win in Portugal polls

LISBON, Portugal—The Socialist Party was preparing for government Monday, a day after recording a landslide general election victory that endorsed the center-left party's promised economic reforms.

President Jorge Sampaio was expected to formally invite Socialist leader Jose Socrates later this week to form a government. Socrates is due to take office next month.

The Socialists, who have vowed to modernize the economy, earned 45 percent of the vote to secure 120 seats in the 230-seat legislature in their biggest-ever win at the polls.

Daily financial newspaper Jornal de Negocios said in an editorial on its website that voters showed they were eager for change and that Socrates should use their endorsement to take tough, long-postponed measures.

"These elections permit us to draw one major conclusion: a new country was born yesterday," the editorial said.

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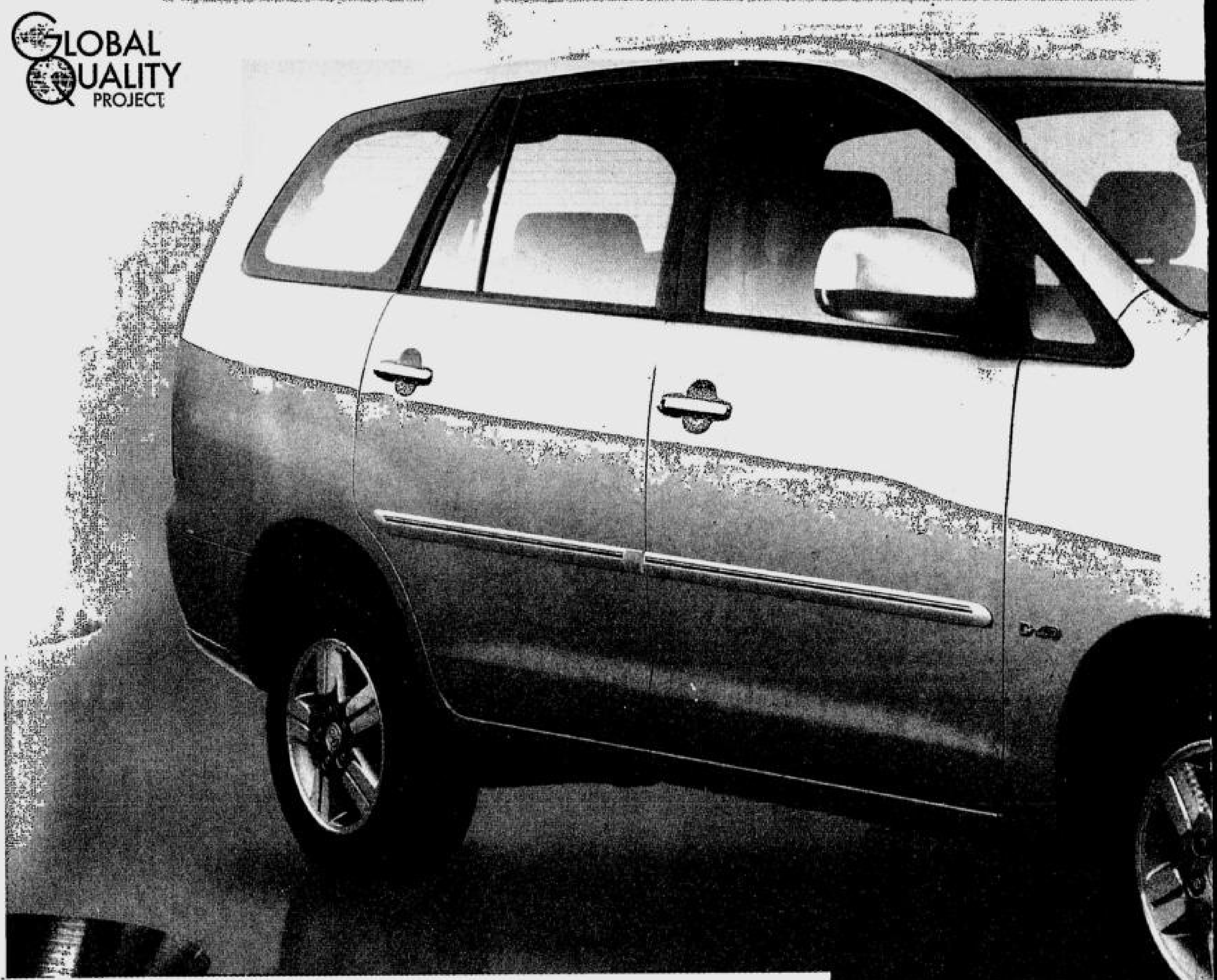

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Israel frees Palestinian prisoners after Gaza vote

JERUSALEM—Israel freed 500 Palestinian prisoners in a good-will gesture Monday, a day after the government gave final approval to a pullout from Gaza and a revised route of the West Bank separation barrier that would encompass at least 6 percent of land claimed by the Palestinians for a future state.

With the historic Cabinet vote, Israel began charting its final borders, bypassing negotiations and angering the Palestinians. Prime Minister Ariel Sharon said the decision to leave Gaza and four settlements in the northern West Bank was the hardest he ever made, but would ensure a better future for Israel.

Sharon signed an order saying Israeli civilians would have to leave the areas slated for evacuation by July 20. Those remaining would be removed by force over a period of two months. Settler leaders have pledged not to leave voluntarily, and security officials are bracing for violent confrontations.

In the West Bank, Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas won the backing of his Fatah movement for a new 24-member Cabinet after a stormy debate, clearing the way for approval of the new ministers by parliament later Monday.

The release of Palestinian prisoners was one of the gestures Sharon agreed to at his summit with Abbas earlier this month in Egypt. Convoys of buses carrying shackled inmates left Israel's desert prison camp of Ketziot around dawn Monday, and arrived at five drop-off points on the edges of the West Bank and Gaza Strip just before noon, military officials said. They were greeted by cheering crowds of relatives.

Those freed had not been involved in attacks on Israelis

Israel has promised to release another 400 prisoners within the next three months. A joint Israeli-Palestinian ministerial committee will decide which prisoners will be released in the second round. Israel is resisting Palestinian demands to free those serving long terms, including for attacks on Israelis.

With Sunday's Cabinet vote, an Israeli government agreed for the first time since capturing the West Bank and Gaza in the 1967 Mideast war to dismantle some of the dozens of Jewish settlements it has built there.

However, in approving the route of the West Bank barrier, Israel acted unilaterally on what was to be a key issue in peace talks with the Palestinians, and signaled it will keep a chunk of prime West Bank land close to Jerusalem, including two large Jewish settlement blocs, Maaleh Adumim and Gush Etzion.

Several Cabinet ministers acknowledged that while the barrier was ostensibly built as a security shield, its route would help determine Israel's final borders with a Palestinian state. Sharon has said he wants to keep large West Bank settlement blocs in any future peace deal with the Palestinians.

Abbas has demanded that construction of the barrier be stopped.

Sharon, a former settler patron and the key proponent of Jewish settlement expansion during most of his political career, said leaving Gaza and parts of the West Bank was difficult. "In all my years of service I have faced hundreds, if not thousands of decisions, some of them matters of life or death, but the decision on the disengagement plan was for me the hardest of all," he said late Sunday.

The Gaza withdrawal won approval from 17 Cabinet ministers, including eight from the moderate Labor Party. Five ministers from Sharon's ruling Likud Party, led by Sharon rival Benjamin Netanyahu, voted against the plan. The Cabinet must still approve each of four evacuation stages, but even opponents said those votes are just a formality.

Even so, Jewish settler leaders said they have not given up. Pinchas Wallerstein, one of the leaders of the council of Jewish settlements, called on supporters to begin "an aggressive and strong struggle," but not engage in violence. *AP*

SOON-TO-BE freed Palestinian prisoners. AP

Charles-Camilla civil marriage legal, says gov't

LONDON—Britain's chief legal officer said Sunday that the forthcoming civil marriage of Prince Charles and Camilla Parker Bowles would be legal, countering speculation by some legal experts that the wedding might contravene a 19th-century statute.

Last week the British Broadcasting Corp. quoted two constitutional experts as saying civil weddings for members of the royal family were illegal under the 1836 Marriage Act.

But Lord Falconer, the Lord Chancellor, said the government had "considered every aspect of this and taken all the appropriate advice."

"I remain confident that the prince and Mrs. Parker Bowles can marry in a civil ceremony," he added.

Government legal experts say the 1836 legislation was superseded by the 1949 Marriage Act, which does not specifically exclude royalty from civil marriages.

A spokesperson for the prince's Clarence House office said the couple had received legal advice and were confident there was no bar to their marriage.

The heir to the throne and Parker Bowles are due to marry on April 8 at the town hall in Windsor, west of London. The civil ceremony, which will be followed by a blessing led by Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams, is designed in part to allay concerns of Anglican traditionalists.

The Church of England—of which Charles will become titular head when he takes the throne—traditionally frowns on church remarriages for divorcees whose spouses are still alive. *AP*

SOCIALIST Party leader Jose Socrates REUTERS

Socialists enjoy landslide win in Portugal polls

LISBON, Portugal—The Socialist Party was preparing for government Monday, a day after recording a landslide general election victory that endorsed the center-left party's promised economic reforms.

President Jorge Sampaio was expected to formally invite Socialist leader Jose Socrates later this week to form a government. Socrates is due to take office next month.

The Socialists, who have vowed to modernize the economy, earned 45 percent of the vote to secure 120 seats in the 230-seat legislature in their biggest-ever win at the polls.

Daily financial newspaper Jornal de Negocios said in an editorial on its website that voters showed they were eager for change and that Socrates should use their endorsement to take tough, long-postponed measures.

"These elections permit us to draw one major conclusion: a new country was born yesterday," the editorial said.

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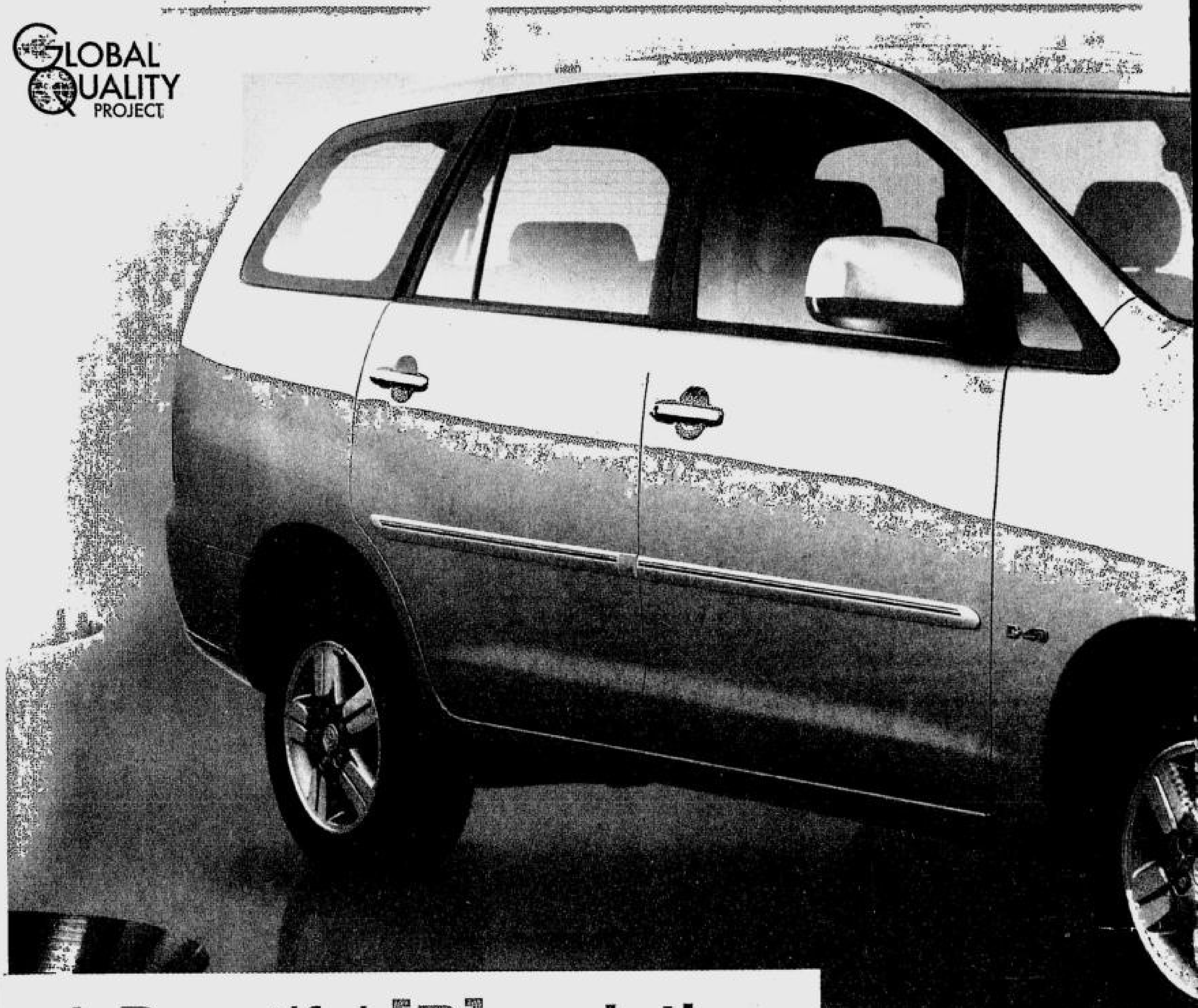

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UN refugee chief quits amid sex harassment claims

NOTICE OF EXTENSION OF THE TENDER OFFER PERIOD OF GLOBE TELECOM INC.

This notice makes reference to Globe's previously announced offer to purchase one share for every fifteen shares (Tender Offer) of the outstanding common stock of Globe (par value P50) from all shareholders of record as of 10 February 2005, at a price of P950 per share.

Due to the declaration of 25 February 2005 as a public non-working holiday, Globe hereby gives notice of extension of the Tender Offer Period by one business day from 2 March 2005 to 3 March 2005. Stockholders may thus tender shares to the designated Depositary, ATR-Kim Eng Securities, Inc., until **3:00 pm of March 3, 2005.** All other provisions of the Terms and Conditions distributed to Globe Telecom, Inc. shareholders remain unchanged.

UNITED NATIONS—After months of criticism, Secretary General Kofi Annan decided that UN refugee chief Ruud Lubbers had to go because of the growing controversy over allegations that the former Dutch prime minister had sexually harassed female staffers.

Lubbers didn't go easily. He resigned Sunday but proclaimed his innocence, saying he felt insulted and accusing Annan of giving in to "media pressure."

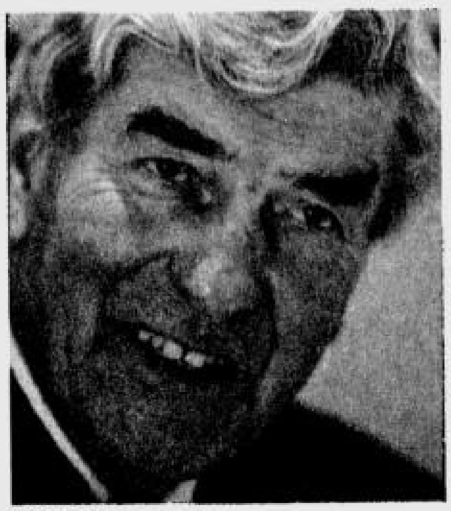
At a meeting with Annan on Friday, UN diplomats said the secretary-general offered the UN High Commissioner for Refugees two choices—resign or face suspension and charges of breaking UN rules.

Allegations first surfaced last year that he had made unwanted sexual advances toward a female employee. But it was only on Friday that the British newspaper The Independent published the first detailed description of her allegations and statements from four other women who didn't file official complaints but claimed Lubbers sexually harassed them.

As the United Nations struggles to improve its image in the face of scandals over the UN oil-for-food program and sexual abuse by UN peacekeepers in Congo, diplomats said Annan decided that Lubbers had become a liability—but he was also a fighter.

After defiantly telling reporters that Annan had not asked for his resignation and he intended to complete his five-year term, Lubbers flew home to Geneva on Friday. But after he left UN headquarters, Annan's office contradicted the refugee chief, saying the prime topic of the meeting was his future.

UN lawyers then started preparing charges against him, UN diplomats said on condition of anonymity.



LUBBERS

Apparently knowing what was coming, Lubbers, 65, decided to resign on Sunday before being suspended.

In his letter of resignation, Lubbers maintained his innocence, indicating that Annan wanted him to step down.

"For more than four years I gave all my energy to UNHCR," he said. "Now in the middle of a series of problems and with ongoing media pressure you apparently view this differently."

"To be frank, and despite all my loyalty, insult has now been added to injury and therefore I resign as high commissioner," Lubbers said.

On Friday, he insisted the allegations of sexual harassment were "made up" and "slander."

He vehemently denied the female employee's allegation that he put his arms around her waist, pulled her back toward him and pressed his groin into her at the end of a meeting in December 2003.

"There were two witnesses in the room who very clearly saw that I ushered the lady out of the room with my hand on her back, and that was all," he said. "I call it familiar but certainly not sexual harassment."

Annan had been criticized for months for rejecting the report from UN investigators who concluded that Lubbers' overall behavior indicated "a pattern of sexual harassment." The secretary-general said legal experts told him the allegations could not be sustained—a point he acknowledged in accepting Lubber's resignation.

Nonetheless, Annan said in a statement late Sunday from his spokesman that "the continuing controversy has made the high commissioner's position impossible."

The secretary general is "convinced that (the resignation) is in the best interest of UNHCR, its staff and the refugees it serves that the page be turned and a new chapter be started," the statement said. *AP*

Penis cut by girl retrieved from toilet, then reattached

ANCHORAGE, Alaska—A 44-year-old Anchorage man had his penis surgically reattached after it was cut off by an angry girlfriend and flushed down a toilet, local police said on Sunday.

The events unfolded about midnight on Saturday, after the pair had been arguing over an impending breakup, an Anchorage Police Department statement said. At some point, the two decided to have sex and the man agreed to let the woman tie his arms to a windowsill.

But the woman used a kitchen knife to amputate her partner's penis and flushed it down the toilet, police said.

She untied the man, drove him to a local hospital and was cleaning up the bloody scene when police arrived at the home, according to the statement.

Summoned by the police, workers from the local water utility pulled the toilet up from the floor and were able to recover the severed penis, which was rushed to the hospital for the successful reattachment surgery on Sunday morning. *Reuters*

S. Koreans refuse to pay to hear national anthem

SEOUL—South Koreans want to stamp out a price of their patriotism by ending royalty fees paid to the family of the composer of the country's national anthem.

Last year, those using the South Korean national anthem "Aegukga" paid $6,000 to listen to the solemn tune that translates as "Song for Love of Country."

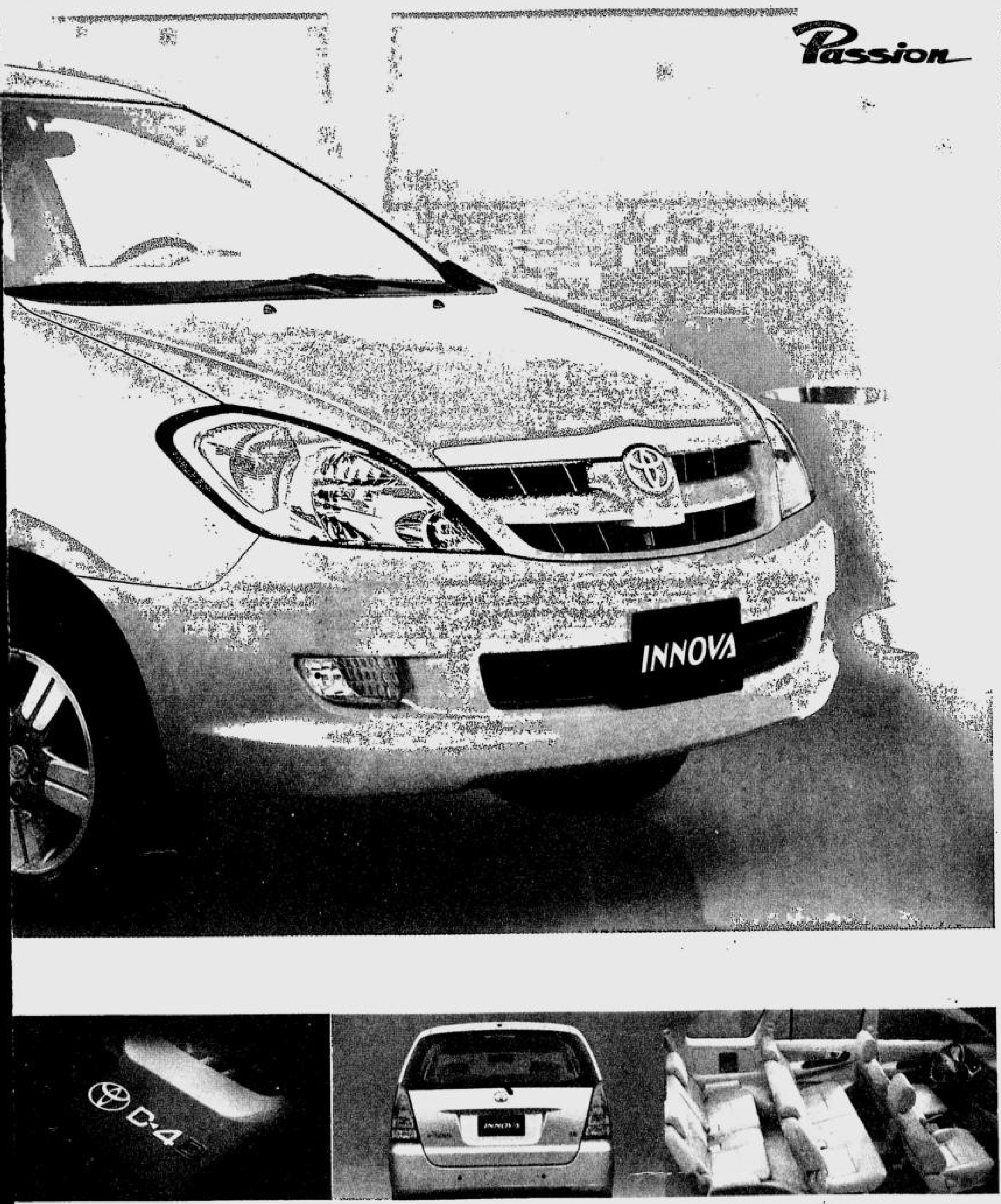
The family of its composer, Ahn Eak-tai, gets a few won each time the anthem is downloaded, played on television stations, in stores or at sports arenas.

Schoolchildren, however, can sing the song for free.

South Korean media reported this month that public outcry is growing to end the payments. Papers have said many groups have called on the government to purchase the song's copyright or change the national anthem.

The royalty accrues to the heirs of Ahn, now settled in Spain. The heirs of Ahn have written to the South Korean embassy in Spain and said they would respect the wish of South Koreas and accept whatever decision is reached, Yonhap news agency reported this week.

"We felt very sorry to hear about the controversy in Korea," Ahn's grandson, Miguel, was quoted as saying in the letter. "Our family has considered 'Aegukga' public property of the Koreans," he said, referring to the anthem that was written in 1936 when Korea was under Japanese colonial rule. *AP*



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EDITORIALS

Dishonorable

WHAT is Congress, or more specifically, the House of Representatives, coming to? In recent years, several members of the Lower House have been convicted or accused of crimes or implicated in their commission. (The chamber was called the Lower House because in the old Legislative Building it was on a floor lower than that of the Senate, but the adjective could also have referred to the general quality of its membership.)

Before World War II, the House was peopled by eminent legislators, some of whom later rose to become senators, jurists and Cabinet members. Two former congressmen, Manuel L. Quezon and Sergio Osmena Sr., were later elected president.

After the war, six former congressmen—Manuel Roxas, Elpidio Quirino, Ramon Magsaysay, Carlos P. Garcia, Diosdado Macapagal and Ferdinand E. Marcos—became president. Marcos at first appeared to be a brilliant leader, one who, according to his own public relations man, was destined to become "the best president the Philippines would ever have." Marcos turned out to be the worst.

Now, who are, or who have been members of the House? Among them are child molesters and rapists like Romeo Jalosjos of Zamboanga del Norte, people charged with or convicted of various crimes like Mark Jimenez (tax fraud, tax evasion and illegal campaign contributions in the United States), Nicanor de Guzman Jr. (gun smuggling), Jose Villarosa (double murder) and Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. (income tax evasion).

Jalosjos' constituents knew that he had been convicted of statutory rape and acts of lasciviousness, and yet they elected him to another term in office. Jimenez's constituents also knew that he was facing criminal charges, but still they elected him to the House. The people really get the representatives that they want and that they deserve.

Now, here is former Rep. Dennis Roldan who is a suspect in a kidnapping case. He will have to be tried in court and found guilty based on the evidence before we can say that he indeed is a kidnapper. If the charge turns out to be true, he must have really fallen on bad times. And if the charge turns out to be true, it will be another mark against the House whose reputation is already in tatters.

The House itself cannot ensure that only the best, the brightest, the most upright and most moral would be elected to its ranks. It is the people who elect these representatives who have to be better educated and better informed so that they can choose the best and the most upright men and women who will legislate for them.

From the heart

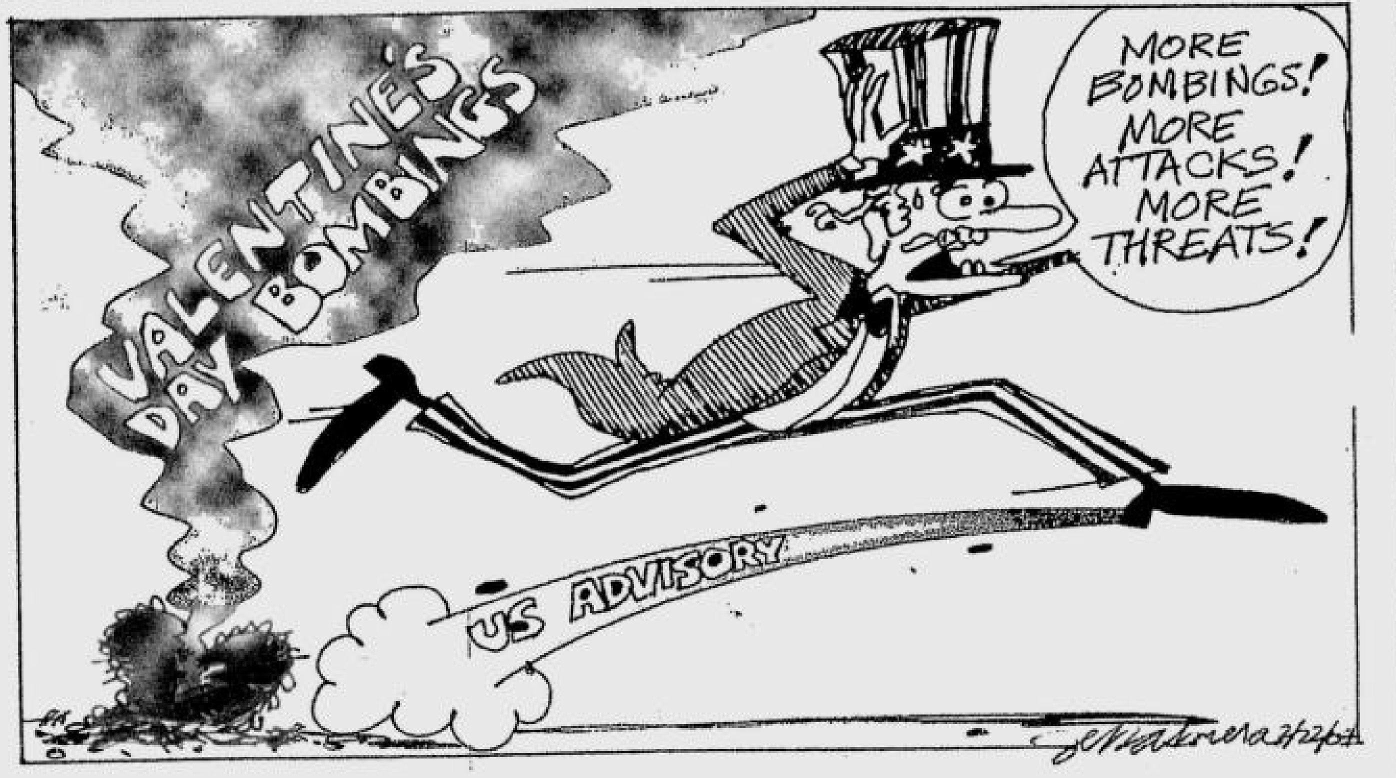
IT WAS a moving story, that one about bank executive Warner Manning who let go of the proverbial British stiff upper lip and wept while delivering a speech last Saturday at the launching of a housing project for families left homeless by last year's killer storms.

Manning, chief executive officer of the Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corp., is one of several expatriate businessmen who have been disturbed by the plight of poor Filipinos affected by recent disasters and who have decided to do something about it. Since he was posted in the Philippines, Manning has been involved in fund-raising activities for street children and for projects to improve and preserve the environment. The Gawad Kalinga project is the latest in HSBC's charities for the poor.

As Gawad Kalinga executive director Tony Meloto said during the launching rites, it would have been easy for HSBC to just donate money for the housing project. But Warner and his wife came and attended the ceremony and even laid down a hollow block foundation for a house. That they took time to do that, Meloto said, shows that their action "is something that comes from the heart."

Businesses and businessmen—both Filipino and foreign—can follow the lead of people like Manning who have decided to do something concrete about the problems of poverty, hunger, disease, ignorance and homelessness that plague the poor. They do not necessarily have to donate money all the time. Some can give of their time and their labor in, for instance, building houses for the homeless.

Of course, we do not expect businessmen to even approximate the magnitude of what Bill Gates of Microsoft has done. Gates set up a $28.8-billion foundation that is conducting a worldwide campaign against diseases like malaria, polio, dengue and HIV/AIDS. But with its financial, management and manpower resources, the business community can be a very effective force in fighting poverty, hunger and deprivation in this poor country.


VALENTINE'S DAY BOMBINGS
MORE BOMBINGS! MORE ATTACKS! MORE THREATS!
US ADVISORY

Last-resort weapon

VIEWPOINT

Juan L. Mercado

OUR grey hair and creased foreheads make us "near-elderly," a tongue-in-cheek tag first used by the Associated Press in 1978. We're vulnerable to memories. This shows when anniversaries, like People Power in late February, roll around.

In contrast, few students today remember the late Sen. Benigno Aquino, Pulse Asia found. Recount how the Marcoses scrammed in helicopters to avoid Benito Mussolini's fate: being hanged by the heels. "Mussolini who?" they ask.

Our memories include how 350 martial law detainees were permitted to attend Mass within the jammed Camp Crame prison. Imelda Marcos claims no such obscenity existed.

Someone hustled up a Mass kit for the imprisoned Philippine Priests Forum editor Constante Floresca, SVD. "The excuse for your arrest was illegal assembly," the late Luis Beltran of Evening News joked. "But your Master was nailed for subversion."

Around the makeshift altar were, among others, Constitutional Convention delegate Teofisto Guingona, businessman Jose Concepcion, Graphic's Luis Mauricio and the Philippine News Service's Manuel Almario. The Chinese Commercial News' Veronica Yuyitung had been released earlier. Did I see UP's Haydee Yorac?

The Daily Mirror's Amando Doronila read the Gospel. He selected Matthew's account of the midnight arrest in the garden of Gethsemane. "Those who take by the sword, will perish by the sword," he tautly read. It reverberated. Most detainees were arrested past midnight.

Minutes after Father Floresca's "Go in peace" dismissal, word came down that there would be no more Masses until further notice.

"All of us must open our hearts to human memory," Nobel Laureate Elie Weisel insisted at the Auschwitz death camp memorial rites. "I do not want my past to become the future of my children…."

Today, many want us to forget. The "five-percent revolution," Ferdinand Marcos Jr. scoffs. That's from a man convicted of tax evasion.

Bongbong clones our communists. Heirs of a failed ideology, Reds fancy themselves as "the vanguard of the masses." But when people revolted, they huddled in safe houses. Today, they try to shuck off, via dolled-up fronts, their stigma as People Power "orphans."

Responding to Jaime Cardinal Sin's call over Radio Veritas, citizens massed and saved martial law enforcer Juan Ponce Enrile from ending up like Mussolini. He had fled when found plotting Marcos' ouster. In the 2004 campaign, Enrile "apologized" to Ilocano voters for People Power. He forgot?

We made headway in preventing a future dictator from reemerging in the 1987 Constitution, INQUIRER's Randy David notes. "But we're far from eliminating those conditions that make strongman rule a seductive alternative."

Has the revolution of rising expectations then curdled into one of frustrated hopes? Between the 1980s and 1990s, exactly 81 countries cast off dictators, notes the UN's Human Development Report. By century's turn, 140 countries held multi-party elections.

The democratic wave fizzled since then. Massive poverty and inept governance foiled delivery on promises. Several countries, like Zimbabwe, returned to authoritarian rule. Somalia and similar failed states breed extremists.

"Many others are in transition to nowhere." That's us. Stagnation persists because we assumed good governance would automatically follow. It does not.

Sorry to rain on our parade, but we didn't invent People Power. Non-violent protests go way back. In 1930, for example, India's Mahatma Gandhi led thousands to Dandi's seashore in peaceful protest against the salt tax.

In the mid-'80s, TV interlocked with satellites. These brought images of Filipinos with rosaries and flowers, blocking tanks, into living rooms the world over. Televised evening news foreshadowed that trend shoving the Vietnam War into American homes.

People Power rippled out, a year later, to South Korea. Chile, Poland, the Berlin Wall's collapse and Czechoslovakia's "Velvet Revolution" followed in 1989.

At Beijing's Tienanmen Square, the Communist Party brutally crushed the seven-week-long pro-democracy protest and people accepted it, recalls UP Law Dean Raul Pangalangan. See that "as part of a historic bargain between the Chinese Communist Party and its people." Is consent at gunpoint an option?

In 1991, People Power swept Russia, and in 1992 Thailand. By 2003, the "Rose Revolution" rocked Georgia. And the "Orange Revolution" freed Ukraine last year. It's unclear if today's street protests in Lebanon and Togo will escalate into People Power revolts.

After a protracted city arrest, Marcos approved our request to accept a United Nations posting abroad. Executive Secretary Jacobo Clave and Palace adviser Alejandro Melchor helped us on that. We uprooted our family, heeding Sen. Jose Diokno's counsel.

Minutes before boarding, the public address system blared: Come to the immigration desk. Heart-in-throat, I trudged forward. "Visitor," I was told. It was the journalists' lawyer in Supreme Court habeas corpus petition, Joker Arroyo. "I wanted to confirm you got away," he chuckled.

"Joker, I appreciate your concern," I gasped. "But I almost got a heart attack. Don't ever do this again, please."

In our twilight years, we recall how brittle our constitutional structures were—and how ordinary citizens stood up against dictatorship.

People ignored Erap when he tried to incite Edsa 3 and 4. Filipinos will risk all for a cause, but not for a souse. That's heartening, too. People Power remains a democracy's weapon of last resort. "Those who answer its call," David writes, "must work hard to prepare the groupd" through good governance.

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A very good year

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

I'VE seen the five Hollywood movies that have been nominated for Best Picture in the Oscars. Don't ask me how, Edu Manzano will not be very pleased with the answer. Those movies are "Aviator," "Finding Neverland," "Million Dollar Baby," "Ray" and "Sideways."

I read somewhere that the curious thing about these movies is that none of them has broken the $100-million dollar mark, a hallmark of many Oscar nominees and winners in the past. These are fairly quiet movies, which did not particularly cost a fortune to make. Who knows? Maybe Hollywood is growing up and improving the American taste—or at least dispelling the mania for bigness. Truly, size doesn't matter, not in this year's Oscars anyway.

It's going to be one hell of a fight in all categories. Interestingly, three of these five movies deal with real people—what we like to call "real-life movies"—which raises all sorts of intriguing questions. They are really more real than real, being interpretations of real people. They capture essences, or fleeting moments in lives. But I'll leave the matter at that rather than get embroiled in a philosophical discussion.

The three movies based on real people are "Aviator," Martin Scorsese's three-hour epic about pre-recluse, or pre-batty, Howard Hughes; "Finding Neverland," Marc Forster's re-imagining of how J.M. Barrie imagined Peter Pan; and "Ray," Taylor Hackford's paean to the late great Ray Charles. I was tempted to say, "late great bluesman," but Ray Charles always defied classification. He even sang country and, like every bit of music he did, turned it into something uniquely his own.

What can I say about the sudden preponderance of fantastic movies about fantastic persons? Truth is stranger than fiction, and fictionalized truth or reinvented life is even stranger than either of them.

It won't be easy judging these movies. Each of them has a charm of its own. "Aviator's" strength are Scorsese and Leonardo DiCaprio. Both do a magnificent job of telling the story of a boy who never grew up—much like that other boy, the finder of Neverland. DiCaprio's boyish charm or adolescent volatility is perfect pitch. The movie's tone is serious and humorous at the same time, not unlike its subject, who demands to be taken seriously and lightly at the same time. It's my best bet to win Best Picture, as well indeed as to give Scorsese his long overdue recognition as Best Director. It's not just because of sentimental considerations—though Oscar judges have been known to make up for the collective guilt of the industry by such gestures—it's also because the movie has a depth of ambition, again not unlike its subject, and succeeds famously.

"Finding Neverland" has Johnny Depp, one of the best actors in Hollywood today, as defiant of its ways as was Marlon Brando, with whom he appeared in "Don Juan DeMarco." And it has Kate Winslet, one of my favorite actresses, and not at all for "Titanic" (I fell in love with her in "Sense and Sensibility"). Like Depp, she isn't afraid to take risks, and has come out of them a winner. She's nominated for Best Actress in "Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind," and she's fantastic there, with a gushing spontaneity that makes you fall in love with her all over again. (That movie, by the way, is one of those curious ones people react to only in extreme ways: You either love it or you hate it. I loved it.) And "Finding Neverland" has Dustin Hoffmann in a supporting role, as Barrie's long-suffering, but devoted, producer. You will recall he was Captain Hook in Steven Spielberg's reinterpretation of "Peter Pan." Collectively, they give the movie its magic, the kind that suffuses unseen everyday life.

"Ray" may not win Best Picture, but it should make Jamie Foxx Best Actor. He leads the pack currently, for very good reason. All the hype is true: rarely has an actor gotten down pat the spirit and letter of the real person he is playing. Foxx collaborated with Charles in the making of this movie—it apparently took 10 years to prepare, unfortunately too long for Charles to be around when it finished—and it shows. The movie is a labor of love, and Foxx's performance is a work of art. You do not have to suspend disbelief for very long: Foxx is Ray Charles. *Sinaniban*, as we would say. He doesn't win Best Actor, I'd protest, too.

I don't know that Lynn Truss, author of "Eats, Shoots & Leaves," the best-selling book about punctuation, would approve of "Million Dollar Baby's" title. She disapproved of "Two Weeks Notice" for its lack of an apostrophe after "weeks." She might disapprove of the lack of a hyphen between "million" and "dollar." But the rest of it one can only approve of. This is easily Clint Eastwood's best movie after "Unforgiven," and the role he plays here is not unlike the one he did then. He has Morgan Freeman as his sidekick here, too, as in "Unforgiven." Freeman should win Best Supporting Actor here. His only competition, as I see it, is Thomas Haden Church in "Sideways."

"Sideways" I absolutely loved, and not just because it talks about life, love and wine, three of my favorite lifelong preoccupations, the last in its broad (formerly) and literal (currently) sense. The movie has a wonderful sensibility, funny and profound, philosophical and scatological, full of wit and ache. Frankly I can't understand why Paul Giamatti didn't get nominated for Best Actor. He essays a finely understated performance here as an ex-husband, future writer and present-day wine connoisseur. It revived my spirits about writing and made me curse gout, the one thing that prevents me from reviving my love affair with the spirits.

But enough said. It's been one very good year for movies, if not necessarily for wine.

Returning decency to TV channels

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

THERE'S an interesting phenomenon in our midst. It used to be that "do-gooder" housewives constantly complained about the low quality of some of the entertainment and news programs in our TV channels, notably the two giants, ABS-CBN and GMA-7. Many housewives, worried about the trash fed their kids on TV, particularly deplored the low level of humor and entertainment in the noonday shows and the bloody murder scenes in the evening news. But lately, noted journalists and multi-awarded scriptwriters and directors have taken up the cudgels for good taste and decency over the airwaves. This means that the journalists and movie practitioners have become truly fed up with all the gossip about movie stars being talked about in these channels. The viewers cannot but take heart from those who have spoken up and support their campaign for the return of decency in RP TV.

* * *

INQUIRER readers learned from contributor Bayani San Diego's recent article in the Entertainment section of columnist Nestor Torre's lament over the untrammeled gossip being fed viewers of both channels about the lives of rival talents. Torre said the "stress on gossip...makes the media stress the personal rather than the professional, and the scandalous rather than the truly newsworthy. It undermines the development of the entertainment audience, by appealing to its unthinking, controversy-loving side." Thus, he said, "the really significant developments in show business are glossed over, while the real or concocted personal excesses of celebrities are almost exclusively focused on."

* * *

In the same article, award-winning movie and TV scriptwriter and director Jose Javier Reyes agreed with Torre: "It doesn't require that much intelligence and discernment to contemplate when a certain hunk has made a gay sex video or whether a particular celebrity is struggling with kleptomania...(compared to) discussing the VAT." He said, "It's no longer enough to pry into the private life of celebrities. Now, the effectiveness of shows is measured in terms of the amount of scandals they air." He conceded that the raging network war is a big factor in the deplorable situation. Adds movie director Gil Portes: "Give us TV shows that will make this country a little better. Is that asking too much?"

* * *

Columnist Alvin Capino of Today, on the other hand, lamented that the "TV war is getting uglier." But while stressing that the networks' exposés against their rivals' talents and personalities are bad enough, what's worse is that these lamentable happenings have "spilled over to the news programs." Alvin lamented that what used to be fun shows to watch in the big channels have become "less than amusing" as they have resorted to "muckraking against the personalities identified with the rival network." He also raised the possibility that GMA-7's attacks on the new toll charges at the North Luzon Expressway is yet another indication of the fierce rivalry between the two giant networks.

* * *

On the dzRH show hosted by Cecile Alvarez and myself a few Sundays ago, we featured, in anticipation of the National Commission for Culture and the Arts' declaration of February as "National Arts Month," two personalities in the movie world: director Mario J. de los Reyes, whose film on gender politics, starring Nora Aunor as a municipal judge, titled "Naglalayag," won the grand jury prize in the Brussels Film Festival; and Frank Rivera, poet, playwright, director and founder of "Sining Kambayoka." The two noted, among other things, how powerful a medium TV is in the education of the people, but unfortunately, for many schools nowadays, what's classified as a "major cultural visit" is to go to the noontime shows on the major channels, which leave much to be desired. Rivera and De los Reyes called on the major networks to introduce better shows, and on the members of Congress to demand such shows as a kind of "exchange deal" for a franchise renewal.

* * *

They noted that the networks keep bragging about the huge profits they are making, but they seem to be making little effort to raise the quality of TV fare above the vulgar muckraking and satisfying the people's desire for escapist shows. They said this inclination toward escapism is demonstrated both in the movies being made and in TV programs that feed on fantasy, horror and escape as well as the popularity of children's films. One notes this tendency in the films that topped the recent Manila Film Festival. But, says De los Reyes, *"Dapat sanayin din natin ang mga mamamayan sa mga 'serious' films, not just the patalon-talon type."*

* * *

Cecile Alvarez, who's executive director of the NCCA, noted the Arroyo administration's stress on education, values and the fight against poverty, which are tackled in one Cabinet cluster. She pointed out that the President inserted a whole chapter on culture into her Medium-Term Development Program, which recently won a lot of praises from Unesco. Cecile said a key part of the administration's cultural program is to provide the 28 poorest provinces with "cultural care-giving" whereby, among other things, the out-of-school youth would be trained in cultural activities to keep them out of mischief.

This is all well and good, and I'm sure that under Cecile's direction, the cultural upliftment of the nation will get a shot in the arm. But the big problem is how to convince the Lopezes of ABS-CBN and the Jimenezes and Gozons of GMA-7 to use their powerful networks to contribute something solid to nation-building. This can be done by drawing their networks away from the inane and infantile shows and the muckraking of rival artists' lives and going into developing programs with more substance and intelligence.

Into the lion's den

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

IN 2001, after nearly a decade of steadily decreasing numbers of young Filipino women deployed as "overseas performing artists" or OPAs, there was a sudden and significant increase in the number of women working as entertainers abroad, especially in Japan. According to a position paper recently issued by 10 NGOs working on the issues of migrant women, the increase occurred alongside what had become in effect the deregulation of the overseas entertainment sector through DOLE Department Order No. 10 and the lowering of the minimum age requirement to 18.

"Under a deregulated policy environment, the deployment of entertainers flourished with Philippine government data registering a record number of Filipina entertainers deployed to Japan in 2003," the NGOs said in the statement. "In recent years, charges of corruption also hounded Philippine government officials and the (formal and informal) overseas entertainment industry involved in the testing, certification and deployment of Filipina entertainers."

It's clear then that the Philippine government has only itself to blame for the ongoing "crisis" over the Japanese government's new and tighter policies on migrant workers. Under pressure from the international community, Japan announced more than a month ago new policies that signaled its intention to seriously crack down on illegal workers within its borders and institute more stringent requirements for the issuance of working visas.

With hundreds of thousands of workers, most of them women, expected to be adversely affected by Japan's move, the government now finds itself trapped between the loud and intensive lobbying of the OPA industry, and its own advocacy on the issue of trafficking and its previous policy track to drastically reduce the number of women leaving abroad to work as entertainers.

* * *

THE HISTORY of the overseas performing artist industry is itself a story of how our country's economic fortunes and flip-flopping polices have conspired to bring us to the current situation. Our government now finds itself in the embarrassing position of having to beg a foreign government to postpone, if not rescind, a policy that was adopted partly out of our own well-intentioned advocacy. I wouldn't blame the Japanese for their confusion over what we Filipinos really want them to do about our "Japayukis."

Here's how the NGO's recall the "OPA story."

"Filipino entertainers—musicians, singers and band members—were renowned in Asia in the 1950s and 1960s for their talent and musicality. With the economic boom in Japan, entertainment became more and more oriented towards pleasing the Japanese *sarariman* (white-collar worker) who worked very hard for the economic success of their companies. In the 1970s, corporate incentives for Japanese workers and professionals included trips abroad that became 'sex tours' which created a huge scandal in many countries like Korea, Taiwan, the Philippines and Thailand. The public outcry resulted in the decline of the sex tours. Soon after, however, the policy of importing Filipinas in massive numbers for the Japanese male-oriented entertainment market was introduced, with the Philippine government itself systematizing and institutionalizing the deployment of Filipinas to Japan. (In fairness, though, Japanese authorities could also be said to have conspired in this trade, though largely by looking the other way.—RJD)

"In 1981, Japan modified its requirement for the issuance of entertainers' visa (minimum two-year work experience) and allowed the entry of Filipino entertainers without the minimum work experience as long as the Philippine government certified them. Thus was born the 'Blue Card,' which later on evolved into the 'Yellow and White Cards,' the 'Artist Record Book,' and finally, the 'Artist Accreditation Card...'

* * *

"IN 1991, the mysterious death of Maricris Sioson, a 20-year-old Filipina entertainer in Japan, drew attention to the plight of Filipina entertainers and the risks involved and problems inherent in Japan's entertainment industry. The advocacy campaigns mounted by migrant and women's NGOs prompted the Philippine government to enforce regulations (such as a minimum age requirement of 23 years for the deployment of entertainers) despite protest from the overseas entertainment industry. Similar cases of mysterious deaths and disappearances...and growing concern for the welfare and protection of Filipina entertainers in Japan prompted the Philippine government to institutionalize the Artist Record Book (ARB) system in 1994 with the objective of providing preparation for Japan-bound entertainers to enhance their protection from abuse and exploitation.

"These policy developments resulted in a significant decrease in the number of Filipina entertainers deployed to Japan but reports of abuse and exploitation of Filipino women continued.

"In 1996, the Philippine government lowered the minimum age requirement for the deployment of entertainers to 21 years old as well as mandated the overseas entertainment industry to establish welfare programs and operationalize welfare and monitoring centers to strengthen on-site protection for Filipina entertainers in Japan. This did not stop the labor and sexual abuse and exploitation experienced by Filipina entertainers from (taking place) which comes mainly from the institutionalized abuse and exploitation that has become part and parcel of the adult entertainment industry in Japan."

And despite our loud protestations of distress and concern, we not only made it easier for even more young women to enter the lion's den, we are even protesting the entry of a lion tamer. Shame!

Of cabbages and kings

SENSE AND SENSIBILITY

Bambi L. Harper

ASIDE FROM FAKYMOLANO and Pharadine, Seid Mossat had a grandson called Subadan who carried the title of Watamama but was treated contemptuously by Chartow and Topang. He had married Fakymolano's daughter, his first cousin by whom he had a daughter Fatima, who in turn married Utu, Rajah Mura's son, and her own second cousin.

On July 7, Subadan Watamama fell sick. On a visit, Capt. Thomas Forrest found him lying in the great hall in a large bed that had a number of silk bolsters, embroidered with gold at the ends, on which the patient reclined. The hall was full of visitors in groups of three or four, seated around a brass salver covered with sweet cakes and cups of chocolate.

Before ascending the stairs, a person would first pour water on the feet of visitors while they rubbed one foot against the other. Forrest picked his way among the groups and "went stooping with my right hand almost to the ground as is their custom." He sat cross-legged near the foot of the bed on a mat and asked the patient how he was. The patient appeared feverish and he told Fakymolano, who sat beside him, that he thought he should be given a purgative.

Next morning, the captain again visited Watamama bringing with him some medicine. His wife and daughter Fatima would not allow him to take it even if Molano urged it. Fakymolano finally said, "Let you and me, Captain, drink this physic; I am certain it is good." So saying, he drank half of it and Forrest drank the rest.

On the 27th, Watamama died. Forrest heard the dismal cry set up by the women of the household. In the courtyard, carpenters exerted greater effort cutting the wood to make his coffin of thick planks strongly dovetailed. They had begun it two days before his death and although their strokes were not loud, Forrest was sure the sick man must have heard them.

In the morning, the coffin was carried to the burial place 200 yards from his house. About noon, the corpse, covered with a white cloth, was borne out on the bedstead where he had died, and part of the wooden wall of the house was taken down to allow it to pass. The bedstead was carried by young men, mostly his relatives, with 12 umbrellas held over the body. The corpse was laid into the grave about five inches deep and the coffin, without a bottom, was laid over it and earth thrown in. Over it was poured water from porcelain Chinese decanters, their spouts bound with white calico to strain the water.

Only men attended the funeral, but neither Tooppan nor his brother Uku was there. From the time of his death until the funeral, many guns were fired at intervals. Next day, a shed was built over the grave and a temporary floorboard where the widow lived for a week. In his house, relatives butchered cattle, sang dirges in his honor and for the repose of his soul.

On the 25th of August, a proa arrived from Zamboanga with an envoy on board who brought letters from the governor to Rajah Mura. The envoy's name was Huluan, a Filipino with the rank of ensign. He brought a sergeant with him who trained the rajah's guards daily in the use of the musket and bayonet. The guards numbering 30 were captive Visayans who on formal occasions dressed in uniforms of blue broad cloth, trimmed in red with white buttons of tin. They had grenadier caps with the motto, "Yo el Rey" (I the King). The envoy, the sergeant and six soldiers from Manila were lodged at the fort.

Finally, the Rajah signified that he wanted Forrest to accompany him to visit the sultan. The palace was about 120 feet long and 50 feet wide. The first floor rose 14 feet from the ground. Thirty-two pillars supported the house in four rows, eight to a row. Through some windows, cut low, pieces of iron pointed outward. Boats were kept in the lower part. The upper stories were matted.

The first row of pillars was about 10 feet covered with scarlet broad cloth to the top where at the height of about 20 feet from the first floor they sustained the beams and rafters on which rested a substantial though light roof made of sage tree leaves. From the top of the inside, pillars with broad white borders extending them comprised the ceiling.

A moveable slight partition divided the whole into two parts. The first part held six pieces of mounted cannons. The inner apartment was not floored in wood but covered with split *anebong*, a kind of palm tree, going the whole length and covered with matting and some carpets. It was preferred because it admitted air from below, making the palace remarkably cool.

Between the two farthest pillars of the farthest apartment stood the bed on a stage of plank, a foot high, covered with mats. The tester held three rows of curtains, the inmost of white calico, the next of blue and the outermost of silks in contrasting colors.

Opposite the bed was what looked like a Chinese porcelain shop with rows of 30 Chinese jars with a capacity of 20 gallons each. Above them on another shelf stood another row of jars, and the next shelf exhibited a row of black earthen water pots with brass covers. A fourth shelf held salvers and cuspidors. Toward the end was another row of shelves containing more jars and opposite were two rows of red-colored Chinese chests.

(From Capt. Thomas Forrest, "A Voyage to New Guinea, and the Moluccas, from Balambangan," 1780)

* * *

Comments to bambiharper@yahoo.com

My Mafia

YOUNG BLOOD

Lynn Ramos

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the twentysomething and below.—Ed.

WE left Davao for Manila when I was about 3 years old. I could still speak Bisaya then, I am told.

Eventually my parents separated, and my sister and I lived with our mom. Since then, our familial interactions were limited to the maternal side. Birthdays, holidays and most weekends were spent with mom's family, the family I have known for practically forever.

I grew up in the metropolis, with nary a trace of my southern roots. The only Bisaya words I knew were *ambot* and some obscenities I had picked up from our maids. Acquaintances go *"Ta-luh-gaahh??"* in disbelief when I tell them my birthplace, which I mention like it's a piece of trivia.

Davao was a hazy memory connected with *ampaw*, durian, a lot of kids and a terrace. Stories of my early childhood evoked only the faintest images or none at all. When a relative visited Manila, it felt strange to be introduced to someone unknown although startlingly familiar.

I lived and breathed Metro Manila (literally, the smog and the heady perfumes of the *taga-siyudad*) almost my entire life. Everything I knew revolved around this fast, urban vortex where a second lost is a huge deficit. Thus, planned trips to Davao were postponed for some other time, if not shelved indefinitely, for one reason or another: I had to take lessons in French, I couldn't possibly miss tennis, I was taking care of my college application, my academic load was hell, and so on. There was always an excuse to answer the eager *"Kailan kayo babalik?"*

Then Tatay died, apparently looking for the *apo* whose real name he could not pronounce properly and so he had given given her another that stuck. He loved carrying her in his bony arms.

His death made me deeply sad and guilty for all those many years of detachment. So, we promised for the last time and, after my graduation from college, boarded a plane for our homecoming.

The sun was high when we arrived at Davao International Airport. I immediately took out my trusty umbrella to shield myself from the glaring rays. My umbrella and me would be met with amused glances from passersby and in-the-face ridicule from my *buang* cousins throughout our stay.

Along the way to Nanay's house—the "HQ" (Headquarters) as my cousins called it—we passed a long line of shops that all had signs saying "Buhangin." Hmmm, I thought, the town must need sand so badly since I did not see a single grain anywhere and the shop owners did not seem to mind the competition. When I voiced out this observation, I was met with loud guffaws. Buhangin was the name of the town. I had a lot to learn.

We were greeted by our perpetually energetic octogenarian matriarch, Nanay, who would later fuss about us and serve us a feast every hour, and a pretty, loquacious little cousin of whom I would grow very fond. We wasted no time getting reacquainted with a multitude of relatives.

Every face reminded me strongly of my dad. Everybody resembled my dad in some way, although I was hard put to define it exactly. I resembled them, too, because this was after all the other half of my genealogy, my family.

The next five days was a whirlwind of sightseeing, rides, night-outs, bonding, house-hopping, singing and, most of all, eating and drinking and drinking and drinking. There's nothing quite like them, us, in the latter activities. Give us poison and we'll likely end up with just bum stomachs.

My Davao family was fun, crazy, colorful like ... a carnival. The Disappearing Drunk, The Amazing Chords of Uncle Ben, The Flying Scooter, The Man With No Facial Expression, The Screaming Midgets, Dark Man and White Lady, The Chain Smoking Doctor—they were all there, plus a whole bunch of characters and more. Being with them was a roller-coaster ride that left me dizzy as hell but raring for another go. Too bad I wasn't able to witness the famous boxing matches.

Falling in love with Davao City was effortless. Trees were in abundance, nature was only minutes away from the city, "traffic" meant that vehicles were moving at not more than 40 kph, beer was cheap and overflowing, the peso actually had purchasing power. Everybody was relaxed, stress-free while nurturing their professional careers. This may be attributed to the strong family support system that seems to be slowly vanishing in increasingly individualistic Manila. I guess that's why I love films about large, noisy clans like "My Big Fat Greek Wedding" and adore "The Godfather" trilogy for the Italian Mafia's sense of loyalty to family. I have my Mafia now and Davao City is my Sicily.

On our last night, I was tipsy with all the festivity with the rest of the gang who could not stop caterwauling. When I woke up the next day, the sun was high. I did not mind that I had a tan. I had Joey Ayala's autograph which read: *Maligayang Pagbabalik.*

I smiled wistfully.

Lynn Ramos, 22, graduated last October from UP Diliman with a BS Mathematics degree.

NOTICE TO YOUNGBLOOD CONTRIBUTORS:

If you are sending your contributions by e-mail, please address it to youngblood@inquirer.com.ph together with your address and information about your age and the school, course and year you're enrolled in or if employed, the position you're holding and the company you work with.

THEY SAID

Opposition's bane

"They are all entertaining ambitions to take over, and that's the bane of the opposition."

—Miriam Defensor-Santiago, on the difficulty of the opposition to get its acts together

Lost faith

"Perhaps, there are no modern-day miracles because we fail to discern them when they unfold in our daily lives. We have become too much challenged by logic and, in the process, have lost a large amount of faith."

—Film director Ben M7 Yalung

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It's not right to burden Filipinos with new taxes

CREDIT-RATING agencies seem unimpressed by President Macapagal-Arroyo's engagement of a Hong Kong expert to solve our corruption problem and a Peruvian expert to get us out of the economic rut. The perception is the evaluators are unhappy over Congress' foot-dragging on Ms Arroyo's proposed tax measures.

The government aims to raise P80 billion in additional revenues by the enactment of the basket of tax bills now before Congress. But last November, the Ombudsman came out with a statement that P200 billion is denied the government by all forms of corruption ranging from tax evasion, smuggling and illegal transactions in the bureaucracy.

Why then can't Congress preoccupy itself with laws that will cut down the P200 billion annually lost to corruption rather than waste its time on the controversial tax proposals that are tying it in knots? Swift detection and certain punishment are what will stop looting in the bureaucracy and in the revenue collection agencies, and it is laws that will bring this about that Congress should focus on.

For example, what will it cost if the prosecution force of the Ombudsman is increased by 500 lawyers, 500 accountants plus staff, and the Sandiganbayan engages more judges and staff for a hundred courts exclusively hearing corruption cases? Even if we include the bounty for informers, this may not cost the government P5 billion annually, which is a small investment if we can cut by just one-half the money now lost to corruption. And we would solve Ms Arroyo's P80-billion additional-revenue target for this year without saddling the citizens with more tax burdens.

For her part, Ms Arroyo can initiate what she should have done four years ago to deter corruption in the bureaucracy, i.e., prosecute those suspected of committing the crime from the Ramos years to the present, with grim determination. She can start with her favorite former Cabinet members (Hernando Perez and Hernani Braganza) who were recommended for prosecution by former Presidential Anti-Graft Commission chair Dario Rama, but who were exonerated by the "peers committee" that was especially constituted to review Rama's report.

Rama must have made some interesting recommendations of which the public would never know. Rama is now relegated to the obscure position of postmaster general, his lips sealed forever on what his eyes have seen in the "lifestyle check" committees he had been part of. Short of doing her part to stop the looting of public funds, Ms Arroyo has no right to pass on to the beleaguered citizens the burden of funding a decrepit government.

—E.P. DAKANAY JR.,
43 Baltazar St.,
Philamlife Village,
Pamplona, Las Piñas City

STILL an ignored sector

PDI PHOTO

No share for small fishermen

WE would like President Macapagal-Arroyo to know that the 6.1-percent increase in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) last year was not felt by the small fishers whom we have been working with in the provinces of Pangasinan, Sorsogon, Cebu and Sarangani.

The income of these small fishers remained virtually unchanged—at an average of P3,600 monthly in the last two years. In fact, their real income shrank because the average inflation rate, according to the National Statistics Office, increased from 3 percent in 2003 to 5.5 percent in 2004.

The Department of Agriculture has released a data showing that the fisheries sector grew by 9.45 percent last year. But Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap himself said that this growth was mainly due to aquaculture, particularly growth in seaweed production.

The municipal fisheries subsector grew by just 2.43 percent; even then, the small fishers could not get a share of it. Why? Because middlemen are able to dictate the price of every fisher's little catch, which he sells independently of other fishers. The individual fisher does not have market leverage.

At present, fisherfolk cooperatives remain small and cannot engage in trading beyond the village *talipapa*. They have neither the capital nor the facilities to market the bulk of the fish catch at the town level. With the freshness of his catch—say, a kilo of *galunggong*—decreasing by the hour, a fisher is forced to sell it to the middleman at P50, half its retail price at the town center's wet market. So, in effect, it was the trader that benefited from the 2.43 percent in municipal fisheries production.

The situation in the seaweed industry was not very different; it was not the small producers but the middlemen and the few local processors who raked in most of the profits. Consider the following: dried seaweed is bought by middlemen at a farm gate price of P18 per kilo; they sell it at P41 per kilo to local processors, and the latter export processed seaweed at US$11 per kilo (more than P500)!

One must pity the small seaweed producer, considering that his family's labor is not even taken into account in the cost of production.

We have, time and again, advocated what is called "vertical integration" of the municipal fisheries sub-sector into the mainstream economy. It means ensuring that the fisherfolk and their products are linked to the processing, to the aquaculture sub-sectors and to major markets here and abroad. It is not just a question of marketing, but of empowering the fisherfolk through the right policies, and by helping them develop the necessary skills, technology and resources.

Up to now, the fisherfolk have remained an informal sub-sector, largely ignored by the government. We hope that this time, President Arroyo will listen.

—JAIME ESCOBER JR.,
information officer,
Tambuyog Development Center,
91 V. Luna Road,
Sikatuna Village, Quezon City

Deliberate misinterpretations

THIS is to clarify the misleading letters of T.G. Bernardino, president of Picop Resources Inc., and Surigao del Sur Gov. Vicente T. Pimentel Jr. (PDI, 2/4/05 and 02/16/05)

Bernardino denied the allegations of Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago that Picop is among the most deadly illegal loggers in the country. He also "invited" Santiago to Bislig to "see for herself and personally hear the answers to all her questions about Picop."

Santiago's list of illegal loggers was made based on documents from different government entities (chief of them the Department of Environment and Natural Resources) and from confidential sources. Up to this day, Santiago's office has been receiving reports of Picop's violations. In any case, if Picop is indeed innocent, then Bernardino should welcome the Senate inquiry on illegal logging. It will be to the benefit of Picop to clarify the issues in the proper forum.

As to Pimentel's denial that massive illegal logging exists in his province, it appears that Pimentel and the DENR have vastly different views on what constitutes "illegal logging of massive proportions." For Pimentel, the only illegal loggers in his province are the jobless *kaingineros* and chain-saw cutters. For DENR officials, Surigao del Sur is among the areas in the country where big-time illegal logging operations exist.

Pimentel also complained that Santiago included him in a list of governors coddling illegal loggers. This is either a thoughtless misapprehension or a deliberate misinterpretation of the contents of the senator's privilege speech. In her speech, Santiago clearly said that she is not making "individual judgments of these governors, but leave them to explain themselves," because under the law, "the main public officials responsible for the fatal after-effects of illegal logging are the governors of the provinces where notorious illegal logging activities are allowed to continue."

Surely, as a responsible government official, Pimentel knows by heart his duties under the Local Government Code to "adopt adequate measures to safeguard and conserve... forest and other resources of the province" and to "call upon the appropriate national law enforcement agencies... to apprehend violators of the law when public interest so requires, and the police force of the component city or municipality where the disorder or violation is happening is inadequate to cope with the situation or the violators."

—GILBERT S. VASQUEZ,
legislative staff officer,
Office of Sen. Miriam
Defensor-Santiago,
Room 518, Senate
Roxas Boulevard, Pasay City

What's the water rate hike for?

I AM compelled to write this letter, hoping to awaken the people behind Maynilad Water Services Inc. (MWSI) and to prompt them into doing something to improve its very, very, very poor service.

If the other water provider, the Manila Water, can provide an almost excellent service (based on actual feedback of its customers), why is it that Maynilad can't?

To top it all, Maynilad has increased its water rates. For what? For its deteriorating service?

—FERDINAND D. DE GUZMAN,
15-C Pitimini St.,
SFDM, Quezon City

In the name of charity

I FIND the logic of lawyer Jo Imbong, executive director and lawyer of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines quite interesting and even funny.

In a Senate hearing, she admitted that the Catholic Church hierarchy accepts donations from gambling lords for charity and other community projects. That the Church accepts donations from "polluted source" makes the Church's stand at best inconsistent and at worst, hypocritical; officially Catholic bishops condemn gambling as evil. Archbishop Oscar Cruz, former president of the CBCP, is on record in his opposition and condemnation of *jueteng* lords and other forms of gambling.

Evangelical Christians reject gambling as evil, not only because the Bible condemns laziness, but also because a host of other evils follow in gambling's wake.

To say that donations from gambling go to charity and other humanitarian projects cannot justify such evil practice. The end does not justify the means. Look at the effects of gambling: criminality, broken homes, bad debts and wrong work ethic. It produces money which is not earned, money which does not come from labor and thrift. It is reminiscent of the soldiers who gambled on Christ's clothing at the foot of the cross, while the Saviour was dying for the sake of sinful humanity. Oh, how many crimes are committed in the name of charity!

Until and unless the Roman Catholic Church sheds off this practice of accepting donations from gambling and other polluted sources, all its protestation and condemnation of gambling as evil will be devoid of sense and substance.

—REV. SALVADOR D. EDUARTE,
associate minister,
United Church of Christ,
Talinkapor, San Nicolas,
Pangasinan

Roxas' 'photo ops' explained

THIS concerns Raul Palabrica's column titled "Photo ops" (PDI, 2/7/05), wherein he cited a reader's comment on the photo of Senators Mar Roxas and Serge Osmeña that came out in the INQUIRER's Jan. 28 issue.

Allow us to stress that Roxas wants the College Assurance Plan Philippines Inc. (CAP) to succeed financially so it can fulfill its promise to planholders. The senator is taking the matter of CAP's financial problems seriously. This is why he is endorsing the Securities and Exchange Commission's urgent recommendations for CAP to promptly resolve its severe liquidity problem, its P21-billion trust fund deficiency and its P5.4-billion capital impairment.

In the picture mentioned in Palabrica's column, Roxas was shown doing a "thumbs down" sign beside Osmeña, who displayed an identification card of CAP Health Maintenance Organization Inc. or CAP Health (not CAP the mother company as reported).

Here is the context of the "photo op." Osmeña had just delivered an impromptu privilege speech questioning the Senate's decision to engage CAP Health as the health service provider for over 1,800 Senate employees at a time when CAP, the mother company, is having serious financial problems. Roxas interpellated Osmeña extensively on the floor.

In the photo, Roxas was doing the thumbs down sign to demonstrate his rejection of CAP Health as the health service contractor of Senate employees.

While CAP Health is an entity separate from the mother firm CAP, Roxas is deeply concerned that CAP Health could soon possibly be adversely affected, too by the mother firm's financial difficulties.

Roxas does not want to gamble with the health of Senate employees and their families.

The senator does not want Senate employees and their dependents to be deprived of adequate health care later on should CAP Health checks (paid to hospitals and doctors) bounce too, just like what's happening now to checks issued by the mother firm.

In fact, published reports recently suggested that CAP, the mother company, to cope with its "acute liquidity problem" (as uncovered by the SEC), has been advancing cash from affiliate companies, including CAP Health.

We hope this clarifies the matter.

—RUTH P. GUHIT,
media relations officer,
Office of Sen. Mar Roxas,
Rm. 512, Senate, GSIS Building,
Roxas Boulevard, Pasay City

InqBox

A survey reveals that more Filipinos are unhappy with their lovelife. What needs to be done to make your lovelife happier?

love ur special sum1 wid all ur heart! Unconditional love is d key 2 happiness!
—flor reyes, *tayabas, quezon*

2 make my lovelife happier i need 2 make myself a giver, not a taker 2 my partner.
—rosemarie domino, *bacoor*

it shld be a give and take process, kasi boring ang take or give ka lagi. dapat vice versa.
—marigen b. Jordan, *makati city*

be at least 5 foot 10 inches tall, a hustler in sex at magaling mambola kahit walang pera.
—ariel gili, *gen. trias, cavite*

i suggest to be creative, & experiment on new things each day with ur lovee.
—chris estallo, *pque*

Live a simple life. Don't be too materialistic. play Ragnarok with your partner.
—cris manas, *solano, nueva vizcaya*

i wud have 2 say dat 2 make ur luvlyf happier, never stop making ur mate fall in luv with you. Don't stop courting & never fail 2 say i luv u.
—dorothy de guia, *pasay city*

for me dapat i-legalize na ang divorce, para ang unhapi ang lovelyf wthn d marriage, eh legal ang paghihiwalay para humanap ng bagong love.
—loren gannaban, *valenzuela city*

partners must learn to respect each other. ACCEPT THIER SHORT COMINGS and Both must work together 4 HAPPIER lovelife
—rey b. vargas, *NAVOTAS, M.M.*

You chose ûr love, so love ûr CHOICE.
—Heyz De Dios, *angeles city*

Make lovelife happier by strengthening friendship thru unconventional, witty & simple activities & conflicts!
—Jenny Michelle Panganiban, *Calamba City*

Be content with what your family has & what ur spouse gives you. DONT ASK 2 MUCH! Seek other important things..
—Myrachael S. Nolasco, *batangas*

give urselves a break-a time to spend with ur love one
—reine ann conlu, *cebu city*

avoid jealousy, insecurity, and selfishness. always support each other, avoid argument and be proud of one another.

mag-ligawan
ulikayo!

—beverly alviz, *pampanga*

to love passionately, one's partner n oneself, n 2 b really open with each other about even d littlest things
—abet, *lucena*

make GOD the center of every relatiOnshp. Spend time 2gder during ur free time. ur partner in life is a UNIQUE creatiOn of GOD!
—Theresa Tanco, *Parañaque*

simple lang, wag nyo munang isipin ang mga problema... bigyan ninyo ng oras na maging masaya kayo... makipag-date kayo
—Jessica S. Navarra, *Manila*

To make our lovelife happier, is to have faith in God. Through prayers that gives us strength...
—Greg Saraos, *Intramuros, Manila*

i believe dat most filipinos base their love primarily on d physical aspect, and not rooted on friendship. Physical attraction can easily fade.
—heherson laggui, *makati*

u can have a happy lovelife if u can feel satisfaction, u must have loyalty and trust 2 ur partner, and vice versa
—daisy reyes, *tayabas, Quezon*

Accept him or her for what he or she is, and d fact that u cannot change ur partner to what U want him or her to be.
—Arlene V. Del Rosario, *SJDM City*

Understanding is the most powerful weapon for a happier lovelife.
—Katherine Marte, *Bacolod City*

d way 2 b happy is 2 accept things as they are. loving sOm1 s nOt a matter of chance but a matter of chOice.ü
—ingrid valde, *southern leyte*

love ur life, smile wenever he makes mistakes, dat is enough punishment 4 him di ba? na preservb pa mga cells u.
—zenaida caguioa, *urdaneta city*

a lot of money of course.., be practical, how could u enjoy ur lovelife with an empty stomach?
—gerry singson, *vigan city*

be contented with ur partner and recall happier moments in ur relationship...
—philip rosco, *zamboanga city*

Ders nothing to be done 2 make my LUVLIFE HAPPIER, I already accept what he is, and try to learn from our EXPERIENCE.
—Claire Bien, *Q.C.*

da govt. shud make a law 2 legalize divOrce n da phil. Bec many FilipinOs are unhappy wid their lovelyf & marriage
—jasmin Federico, *palayan city*

we shud alwys ask ourselvs, what really can make us happy? contentment with what we can have is important & always try something new.
—jayper merla, *balanga city*

Sweethearts should always communicate to iron things out whenever disputes arose between them.
—LARRY LATORRE, *lipa city*

Always have God at d center of ur lives and spend sOme time alone with each other. Experiment in lovemaking!
—Leilani B. Gonzales, *ALBAY*

Being faithful & honest with ur loved 1 are d keys 2 a hapi lyf & in order 2 keep d fire burning
—erjohn sta. maria, *bais city*

Its bec of d wrong idea dat happiness cums from sum1. Happiness cums from within.
—susan Estrada, *qc*

dahil sa ecOnOmic crisis, naapectohan ang maraming tao, dahil mas gusto nilang ibili ng pagkain kesa sa ibang bagay.
—ma. luisa rabaya, *calOocn city*

Humor is very essential in a relationship. Light moments become memorable bec dey build a strong foundation in a relationship.
—noel silang, *batangas city*

learn 2 love urself 1st, b4 loving others.
—elizabeth Estrada, *san pedro, laguna*

possess patience, understanding, hardwork & practice open communication with each other.
—Romeo Bito-on, *Bayawan City*

para maging maligaya ang lovelife, gawin na lang simple ang adhikain para ligayang mithi ay makamtan.
—dan ballener, *iloilo*

my bounty is as boundless as d sea, my love as deep. The more i give 2 thee, the more i have, 4 both are infinite.
—lito o. ardivilla, *roxas city*

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Agri exec's abductors demand ₱200,000

COTABATO CITY—The abductors of an agriculture officer in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) who was seized on Valentine's Day in Lanao del Sur are asking a P200,000 ransom in exchange for his freedom.

Chief Supt. Sukarno Ikbala, ARMM police chief, said the 45-year-old victim, Rogelio Creencia, remains in captivity in the hinterlands of Tugaya, Lanao del Sur.

Marine Brig. Gen. Ben Dolorfino, chief of Task Force Ranao, said Creencia was supposed to be freed on Saturday night but his captors were apparently confused on who to turn over the agriculture official.

Creencia, a soil and water management expert and regional coordinator of the ARMM's Department of Agriculture and Food's Tipid Abono Program, was with his superior Mustapha Daguduhan when taken by three gunmen in Barangay Panparabato, Tugaya town. They were heading for Marawi City from Malabang, Lanao del Sur when abducted.

"They are neophytes," said Dolorfino of the abductors. He expressed fear, however, that Creencia, a native of Manila, could be handed over to members of the dreaded Pentagon kidnap for ransom gang.

Dolorfino has sought the help of Maranao religious leaders in seeking the release of Creencia.

The Marine official, also the chief of the 2nd Marine Brigade based in Marawi City, said he has received information that the abduction had something to do with the unpaid salaries of provincial employees.

"There appears to have an internal problem," he said. *Edwin Fernandez, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Fixed 3-year term for head of PMA head sought in academy's reform bid

FORT DEL PILAR, Baguio City—Defense Secretary Avelino Cruz Jr. proposed here on Saturday a fixed three-year term for the superintendent of the Philippine Military Academy as part of the reforms in the 106-year-old military training school.

Addressing PMA alumni and cadets during their annual homecoming here, Cruz said the fixed term for the superintendent would ensure that reforms are implemented and the vision of the academy pursued.

In the past 19 years, at least 15 senior officers were appointed PMA superintendent, with Col. Maximino Bejar serving the shortest, for one day, at the aftermath of the February 1986 revolution, and Maj. Gen. Rodolfo Estrellado, the longest, serving for almost three years.

Cruz also said he would soon convene a board of visitors for the PMA to recommend matters such as a curriculum review, improvement of academic proficiency of cadets and the strengthening of the academy's honor system.

Similar to UP

The board, which will be similar to the University of the Philippines' board of regents, will be composed of representatives from the academe, business and industry, and top brass of the Armed Forces, and PMA alumni who have retired from the military service.

Pending the convening of the board, Cruz said he was renewing his order to PMA officials to immediately formulate and implement a comprehensive recruitment strategy to enable the academy to "attract the best and the brightest among our youth to seek admission into the academy and pursue a career in the military."

Cruz said the number of applicants seeking admission into the PMA had been declining, from 21,692 in 1995 to 8,217 in 2002.

Low success rate

The academy also suffers from a low success rate in producing graduates who will serve in the Armed Forces, he said.

For the last 10 years, the entrant to graduate ratio average is only 36 percent, or almost a third manage to graduate, he said. He said they wanted to reach a success rate of 65-80 percent.

Other problems plaguing the PMA include academic decline and a weakening of the honor system.

Cruz said the low number of PMA entrance examinees and the low success rate within the academy could be partly traced to the negative stories on the alumni.

Recently, several PMA alumni were investigated for cases ranging from corruption to simple misdemeanor.

"The situation has not been helped by the spate of negative news stories involving some of the graduates of the academy. But, as I have often stated, we must not lose heart," he said. *Rolando Fernandez and Frank Cimatu, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

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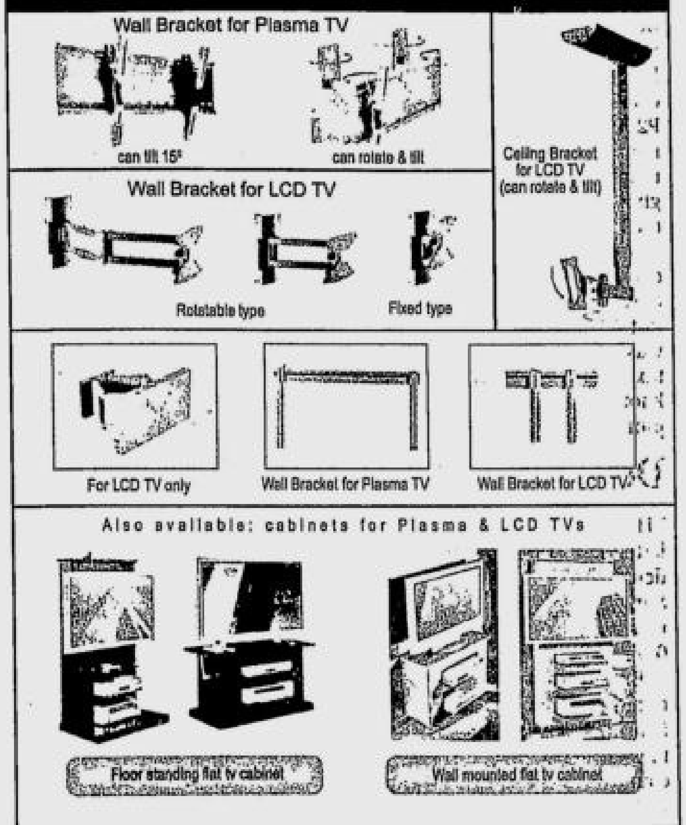

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North tribes tag Benguet, Baguio as peace zones

By Desiree Caluza
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

BAGUIO CITY—Elders of the warring tribes of Guina-ang and Lubuagan in Kalinga have declared Baguio and Benguet as peace zones to avoid the escalation of fighting and retaliation among tribe members based in this city and parts of Benguet.

In a celebration of the *bodong* (peace pact) on Sunday, more than 20 peace pact holders gathered 500 Kalinga tribe members and sealed an agreement declaring Baguio and Benguet as "mataguan" or peace zones.

Tapuey (rice wine), carabao meat and pork were passed around as the sound from the beating of gongs reverberated during the gathering.

Mario Gawen, peace pact holder of the Lubuagan tribe, said the merrymaking was proof that the peace pact holders and tribe members have agreed to the *pagta* or the law that governs the peace agreement.

Before the *lonok* (festivities), the peace pact holders of the tribes exchanged bolos, shields and spears to signify their intention to honor the peace pact.

The peace pact holders also performed the *inom* or *tumangad*, a ceremonial drinking of wine, after the exchange of tokens.

"We will not have this kind of celebration if there was one person who opposed the pact. We have always believed that a single person who disagreed with the pact could cause disorder in our town," Gawen said.

Lawyer Elorde Lingayo, chair of the Kalinga Bodong Convenor's Group Baguio-Benguet chapter, said the tribal conflict started in November last year after Kumbay Malagcay, a Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) federation chair and member of the Guina-ang tribe in Tabuk, Kalinga, was gunned down by a member of the Lubuagan tribe.

Lingayo said the killing was politically motivated.

After Malagcay's murder, an Army soldier, a member of the Lubuagan tribe, was killed in Lubuagan town.

When the conflict started, tribal elders and members of the Guina-ang and Lubuagan tribes thought of forging a peace pact in Baguio and Benguet to protect tribe members based in those areas.

EDWIN BACASMAS

FIRST TASTE
A woman carries her daughter close to a faucet that gave their town in Sarangani province its first taste of clean water courtesy of a water supply system inaugurated recently by President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Duterte, Ricciardone try gun skills after meeting on drug war

DAVAO CITY—It looked almost like a showdown between the outspoken US Ambassador Richard Ricciardone and Mayor Rodrigo Duterte who has endeared himself to anti-US militants because of his opposition to the holding of the RP-US war games here.

Minutes after they met at the graduation rites of the Baker Piston anti-drug joint US-RP training here Thursday, both walked the short distance to the firing range of the National Police Commission (Napolcom).

Right there, an American military man handed each a gun: A Berretta 9 mm semi-automatic, double action pistol.

But the two were not about to shoot each other.

Duterte and the ambassador were trying target shooting in the soldiers' firing range.

"Just be sure you don't embarrass him," a US military officer jokingly whispered to the US personnel handing over the weapons.

Ricciardone's first shots shattered the silence.

After quite a while, Duterte answered with rapid firing that sent shells flying into the air.

The mayor, known for his tough stance against crime and illegal drugs, recently endeared himself to anti-US militants for opposing the holding of joint US-RP Balikatan military exercises in the city.

But Baker Piston exercises are not about RP-US antiterrorist war games but on the war against illegal drugs, US officers said.

"We know about the menace that drug poses," said Richard Kelly, director of the Joint US InterAgency Task Force West, before 65 graduates of the Baker Piston exercises.

"No one has to tell grieving family members the evil that the drugs convey," Kelly added.

Which might have jibed with what Duterte had in mind.

The tough-talking mayor has drawn flak from the same groups who loved him for his anti-Balikatan stance, for his failure to solve the street killings here.

The number of victims of vigilante killings, including minors, rose to close to 50 in the first month of the year alone. *Germelina Lacorte, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Mangyans flee clashes between NPA, Army

CITY OF CALAPAN—Seventy-seven Taubuhid Mangyan families from two sitios in Calintaan, Occidental Mindoro have evacuated for fear of being caught in the continuing fight between government soldiers and New People's Army rebels.

The military men were hot on the trail of withdrawing rebels.

Lt. Gen. Pedro Cabuay, commander of the military's Southern Luzon Command based in Camp Nakar here, on Sunday expressed confidence that Mindoro Island would soon be free from NPA clutches.

"It's just a matter of time," Cabuay said.

Forty-seven families evacuated on Sunday in Barangay Poypoy Hall, Lagtum Pasag, a Mangyan commissioner of the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples, told the INQUIRER on the phone while he was attending a meeting in Mamburao, Occidental Mindoro.

"They came down for fear that they might get caught in the crossfire between the soldiers and the rebels. Tomorrow, we expect more Taubuhid Mangyan families from eight villages to come down," Pasag said in a text message.

Soldiers overran a rebel camp last Feb. 16 and found slices of tamaraw meat, said 2Lt. Jovily Cabading, spokesperson of the 204th Infantry Battalion.

"We are gathering more evidence. We have not pinpointed who did it but we'll file the proper case because tamaraws are endangered, less than 200 (heads) during our last count," said Occidental Mindoro Gov. Josephine Ramirez-Sato in a phone interview.

Sitio Balangabong in Barangay Malpalon, about 10 km from Barangay Poypoy, has become an evacuation area for 30 Mangyan families, said Norman Novio of the Social Services Commission of the Apostolic Vicariate of San Jose.

Cabading, meanwhile, said it was not an "ambush" as claimed by the rebels but a "meeting engagement" that happened last Feb. 19 in Barangay Ligang, Mamburao where two soldiers were killed.

"It was a chance meeting. Our troops stopped when they saw many residents but the rebels fired at them," Cabading said.

She said had it been an ambush, the rebels could have taken some of the soldiers' firearms.

"But there was none so our seven troopers fought back the 30 rebels who then withdrew," she said in a text message to the INQUIRER.

"We are so proud of our soldiers," said Col. Ralph Villanueva, 204th IB commanding officer.

"We will continue to stop the NPA atrocities against rebel returnees, former NPA supporters and innocent civilians. And now, with the cooperation of the populace, we will finally win," Villanueva said. *Madonna Virola, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Mountain town in Aurora to tap electricity from 5 waterfalls

DIPACULAO, Aurora—A plan is under way to build a mini-hydro electric plant in this mountain town of some 2,000 residents.

The potential source of electricity is a 1,148.65-hectare tropical rain forest that feeds at least five adjacent waterfalls in Barangay Dibutunan.

The area, which takes six hours to reach by hiking from the town proper, will be declared a protected landscape under Republic Act 7586 or the National Integrated Protected Area System (Nipas) Act.

A draft of an executive order has been prepared for the review and approval of President Macapagal-Arroyo, according to Rogelio Trinidad, chief of the protected area, wildlife and coastal zone management sector of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources in Central Luzon.

The Japan International Cooperation Agency, Trinidad said, wants this part of the forest declared as a protected area before it could start the electricity project that Sen. Edgardo Angara had facilitated.

The forest is within the 28,000-ha land of the Ilongot tribe, which holds a Certificate of Ancestral Domain Claim to the area.

It is bounded on the west by Quirino, on the east by the Pacific Ocean, on the south by Barangay Ditale and on the north by Barangay Diabarasin, both in Dipaculao.

Trinidad said the Dibutunan forest, considered rich in diverse flora and fauna, is also home to endangered animals like wild pigs, deer, cats and eagles.

"Some areas will have to be set aside as wildlife refuge," Trinidad said. *Tonette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

Negros Oriental town mayors angered by exclusion in tour ads

By Romy G. Amarado
PDI Visayas Bureau

DUMAGUETE CITY—Several mayors in Negros Oriental were disappointed over the exclusion of the province from the promotion of the Department of Tourism's travel campaign dubbed "I love Philippines Biyahe Na."

A visibly irked Mayor Agustin Perdices turned down requests to place the streamers in the city's premier land mark, the Rizal Boulevard, and other conspicuous places here that promote several tourist destinations in the country such as Cebu, Bohol, Bacolod, Negros Occidental, Zamboanga, Vigan, among others.

The "I love Philippines Biyahe Na" is a marketing gimmick of the DOT's campaign to invite domestic tourists and balikbayans to go travel in the country.

Excluded

"I cannot understand why only Cebu and Bohol are included in region seven in the advertisement, both in the streamers and TV ads, while Negros Oriental and Siquijor are excluded," Perdices said.

"Local officials in the province are doing their best to improve our tourism industry, but it appears that the Department of Tourism does not want to help us," he said.

Dauin Mayor Rodrigo Alanano shared Perdices' sentiments. Dauin, a town some 14 kilometers south of here, is home to the internationally known scuba diving haven, Apo Island.

Alanano said he, too, would order the removal of these streamers if these were displaced in any part of his town.

He said he did not see the streamers but saw a similar advertisement on television that showed the country's different tourist destinations, excluding Negros Oriental.

In need of help

But Alanano said the provincial tourism office should have been the first to complain about it because it is their job to promote the province.

Perdices said the DOT should even help the province especially that since its tourism industry is not that strong yet as compared to Cebu and Bohol.

Besides, he added, the money used for these advertisements were taken from the taxes of the people.

"We will confront the regional director of tourism in the next meeting of the RDC (Regional Development Council)," said Perdices. However, the schedule of the meeting is not yet known.

Mayor Rodolfo Gonzales Jr. of Valencia, a town some 11 kilometers west of here, agreed with Perdices, saying the matter should be investigated.

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FRANKLIN CALIGUID/PDI MINDANAO BUREAU

LIVELIHOOD RALLY
Close to 100 workers in the logging industry in the Caraga Region stage a rally Feb. 17 to demand the lifting of the total log ban that, they said, was driving them to starvation.

C. Luzon publisher dies of heart attack

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—Fyodor "Ody" Fabian, publisher of the Central Luzon's oldest newspaper, The Voice, died after a heart attack on Sunday night.

He was 47. Fabian, the eldest son of Central Luzon peasant leader Macario Fabian, began as a cub reporter of the Voice.

In 1992, the Voice's owner, the Baluyut family, entrusted the newspaper to him and he became its publisher.

Before his death, Fabian was preparing the paper's 51st anniversary issue and its exhibit in mass communication colleges in the province.

He also worked at the People's Tonight, first as a correspondent and later, as desk editor.

He also wrote for the Philippine Graphic and was news editor of Headline and managing editor of the SunStar Clark.

He is survived by his wife Beth and their children Carlo, Timmy, Noelle and Chuckie. His remains lie at the St. Jude Chapel in Barangay San Francisco in Mabalacat, Pampanga. *Tonette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

Gov thanks US Pinoy group for hospital funds

CAVITE Gov. Ayong Maliksi yesterday expressed gratitude to Caviteños in California for contributing to the upliftment of the province's health care facilities.

The Organization of Caviteños in Southern California (OCSC), represented by its president, Benjie Bautista, last month turned over $18,000 as partial donation for the renovation of the out-patient department wing of the General Emilio Aguinaldo Hospital.

Maliksi, who has been persistent in improving the facilities of the hospital, said in a press statement that the OCSC contribution will go a long way in improving the hospital's services especially for underprivileged Caviteños.

According to Dr. Vilma Diez, provincial health officer, the proposed budget for the renovation of the out-patient department wing of the General Emilio Aguinaldo Memorial Hospital is P1.8 million.

Currently, the OSCS has collected more than half of the amount needed as the first phase of the renovation is scheduled next month.

The OSCS continues to solicit more funds from fellow Caviteños in Southern California for the completion of the project.

Maliksi expresses his deepest gratitude to the members of the organization for displaying the real character of the people of Cavite.

Scientists …

From page A1

attacks, scientists said.

The detectors read muon particles, which are more powerful than gamma or so-called X-rays.

They would peek into the millions of shipping containers entering the United States by air, ship and land, to detect even nuclear materials wrapped in lead, physicist Chris Morris of the Los Alamos National Laboratory told a conference this weekend of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

"Existing radiographic methods are inefficient for detecting shielded nuclear materials and present radiation hazards to inspectors and vehicle passengers," Morris said.

According to him, the muon rays are already around and represent no additional risk to anyone.

The possibility of a nuclear or radiological "dirty bomb" has haunted US authorities since the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks on New York and Washington. However, just 5 percent of the millions of containers entering the country can be examined with existing equipment.

"We believe we've worked through all of the major obstacles to building a prototype system for a range of security scenarios," said Larry Schultz, who is a member of the team with physicist Rick Chartrand at Los Alamos.

Unlike X-rays in the dentist's office, which emanate from one point, muons from space hit the Earth from all angles. So the challenge for any detection system is to improve computer algorithms to allow tomographic reconstruction, the scientists said.

So powerful

Their device would measure the muon's path and energy as it comes in, and as it comes out the other side, of an object, such as a container.

Comparing how much energy it loses and how much it diverged from a straight line as it passed through allows a computer to sketch the object inside, said Kanetada Nagamine, of KEK Muon Science Laboratory in Japan.

Because the muon is so powerful, it can penetrate plutonium, uranium and lead, as well as steel and aluminum.

That means a muon machine could sniff out a bomb, nuclear materials or a lead casing meant to block other, lesser X-rays, Schultz said.

The margin of error, including triggering false positives or missing the real thing, is less than 3 percent—something that Chartrand said would improve with time.

A million-dollar muon detector could scan a truck in 20 seconds or a shipping container in a minute, he said.

Muon detectors are already used in Japan to view the innards of volcanos in hopes of predicting their eruptions. *AFP*

RP mutes criticism of Burma's rights record

From page A1

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo offers a toast to visiting Burmese Prime Minister Soe Win during lunch in Malacañang.

EDWIN BACASMAS

Ms Arroyo and Soe Win met for roughly an hour to discuss political and trade issues before lunching at Malacañang's state dining room.

In his notes on the meeting, Bunye said: "The Philippines does not agree with those who propose sanctions against Myanmar."

"The Philippines is very sympathetic to the situation of Myanmar and would like very much to help find a way to reconcile Myanmar's situation with the demand of the rest of the world," Bunye added.

Concern for Suu Kyi

The United States and the European Union have imposed sanctions on Burma.

Bunye said the President "consistently expressed concern about the situation of Aung Sang Suu Kyi" during the meeting.

Ms Arroyo praised Soe Win's decision to touch base with its Asean neighbors.

In response, Soe Win said his confidence-building measures to restore peace and stability in Burma had been successful, with armed groups returning to the fold.

'Dictators not welcome'

"Once [the] task is completed a new constitution will emerge and aspirations of our people will be met," said Soe Win.

But at the Chino Roces Bridge, protesters had a different message: Dictators are not welcome in the Philippines.

"Dictators should not be given the red carpet treatment," said Akbayan party-list Rep. Mayong Aguja. He joined some 100 members of the Free Burma Coalition (FBC) and the Initiatives for International Dialogue (IID) in denouncing the meeting between the Burmese and Philippine leaders.

Human rights abuses

Aguja said the Philippines should make a stand against the human rights violations in Burma, where he claimed that residents could not even readily use the Internet and fax machines, and where the number of political prisoners was increasing.

"Sixty-two million Burmese have no freedom, no human rights and no progress," he said.

Philippine responsibility

For his part, FBC Philippines founder Rasti Delizo said that by meeting with Soe Win, Ms Arroyo was, in effect, legitimizing his rule over that country.

"The Philippines is one of the bastions of democracy, and we should speak out against the repression being done in other countries," he said.

Elsewhere, senators urged Burma to defer its scheduled assumption of the chairmanship of Asean next year until it had released Suu Kyi and other political prisoners.

The Senate foreign relations committee, chaired by Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago, made the call in a resolution.

Free detainees, first

"Burma should not assume the Asean chairmanship next year unless there has been compliance with the principles of human rights law, particularly those which necessitate the freedom from house arrest of Suu Kyi and participation of her political party in the political process in Burma," said the resolution.

The resolution noted the remarks made last December by Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr., who had said that Burma did not deserve to assume the chairmanship of Asean because of its human rights violation record.

'Don't sacrifice principles'

Santiago, talking to reporters, noted that the prospects of Manila boosting its trade ties with Rangoon was rich.

But she added: "At the same time, we cannot sacrifice human rights principle in international law so that we can make more money."

In a statement, Santiago said the Burmese prime minister could show the world it was worthy to chair the Asean next year by releasing Suu Kyi from house arrest.

"If the Myanmar government refuses to improve its human rights record, then it should waive or defer its Asean chairmanship," Santiago said.

Burma formally joined the Asean in 1997.

Along with other Asean countries, the Philippines says trade and diplomatic engagement are the most effective ways of coaxing the junta to improve its rights record. *With reports from Reuters, Gil C. Cabacungan Jr., Christine O. Avendaño and Leila B. Salaverria*

BURMESE DID … YOU KILL TODAY?!! -APL
W/ DICTATORS -APL/AKBAYAN
dictators not allowed!
…pend Burma's Chairmanship of ASEAN in 2006!
•Free-Burma Coalition - Philippines

OUTSIDE the Palace, members of the Free Burma Coalition protest the visit of the Burmese prime minister in a rally on Chino Roces Bridge.

ERIK ARAZAS

Nat'l ID plan costs ₱1.6 B, says lawmaker

From page A1

mate, which he culled from records of the previous 12th Congress, was "apart from the multibillion-peso amount needed to revamp the information and computer system of the bureaucracy just to have a national ID."

No budget

"Besides, the budget for a national ID system is not in the 2005 [proposed] budget so the multibillion pesos to be used for such [project] will be taken from the additional taxes originally designed to stem the fiscal crisis," Casiño said.

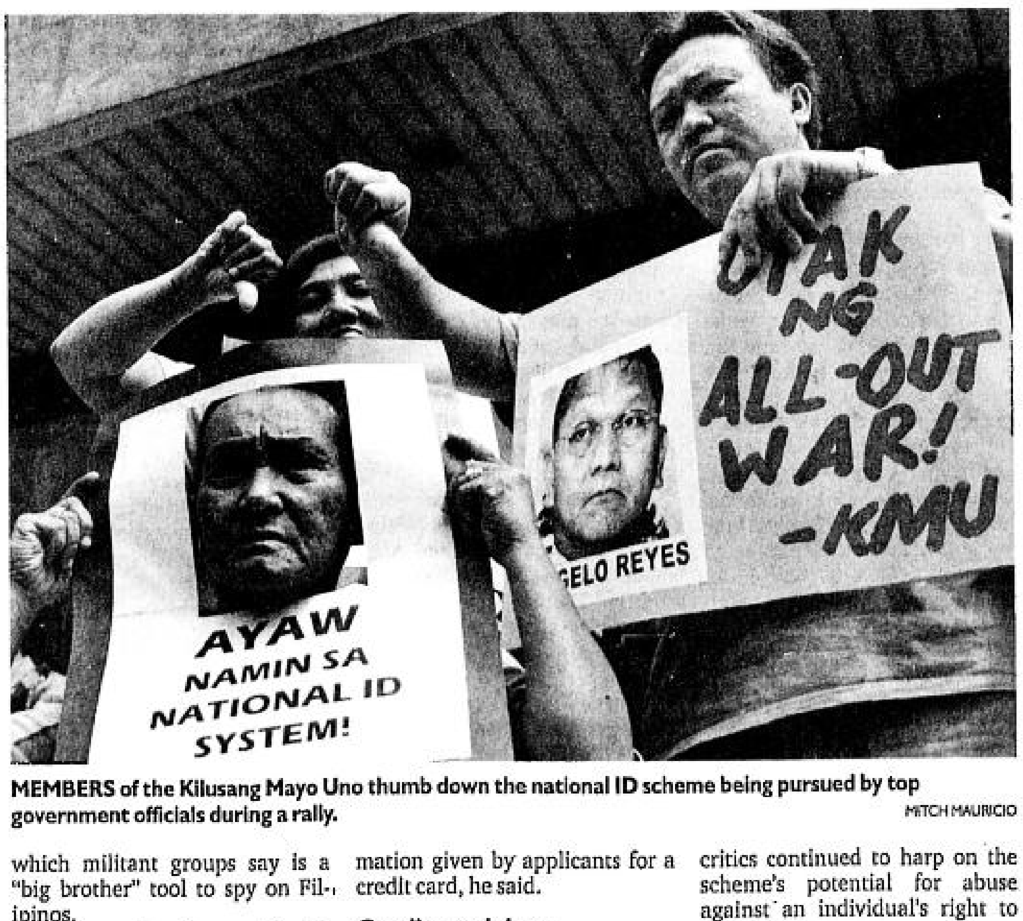
A technical working group is rushing Malacañang's consolidated version of an internal security bill that seeks to toughen up antiterror measures, including the national ID system, Communication Director Silvestre Afable told reporters yesterday.

"The President has expressed strong urgency for this bill," said Afable who stressed that the government was to come up with a balance between the requirements of civil liberties and national security.

The bill was revived after bomb attacks in the cities of Davao, General Santos and Makati on Feb. 14 killed eight people and wounded some 150 others.

Criminal, tax records

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said Malacañang was open to plans to include an individual's criminal and tax records in the proposed national ID system,


UTAK NG ALL-OUT WAR! -KMU
…ELO REYES
AYAW NAMIN SA NATIONAL ID SYSTEM!

MEMBERS of the Kilusang Mayo Uno thumb down the national ID scheme being pursued by top government officials during a rally.

MITCH MAURICIO

which militant groups say is a "big brother" tool to spy on Filipinos.

"That can be discussed," said Bunye in a television interview when asked if records with the Philippine National Police, National Bureau of Investigation, and the Bureau of Internal Revenue would be included in the ID system.

Aside from the information required in applying for a social security ID and driver's license, the national ID will need the information given by applicants for a credit card, he said.

Credit card data

Citibank requires applicants to submit income tax returns (or audit financial statements if self-employed), certificates of employment, latest pay slips, and car registration papers.

But while Bunye and Afable crowed about the merits of an ID system, not only in addressing security concerns but also in facilitating government services, its critics continued to harp on the scheme's potential for abuse against an individual's right to privacy.

"Bunye is up to his old tricks again. This time he wants to play detective Sherlock Holmes, with everybody else playing the suspects," said Renato M. Reyes Jr., secretary general of the militant Bagong Alyansang Makabayan.

"The national ID system is a 'big brother' measure whose real intent is to monitor public activity. It is an institutionalized surveillance instrument which can easily be abused by a paranoid and repressive regime," said Reyes.

Reyes said the ID system could also be used to deprive citizens of their right to gain access to services and restrict their freedom of movement. The scheme was meant to make up for the government's failure to go after criminals, he said.

Spy web

Another group, Pamalakaya, blasted Bunye for coming up with a "stupid argument to market a silly proposal" when he claimed that only those with lots of mistresses or multiple addresses were afraid of the ID system.

"In an attempt to sell an unmarketable proposal and detestable idea, Bunye this time appealed to public morals to generate support for this … national ID system," Pamalakaya national chair Fernando Hicap said.

"The nonstop crusade displayed by Malacañang to execute the national ID system reveals its real motive and that is to place the entire 84 million population on the spy web inside a Palace war room," Hicap added.

In the House of Representatives, opposition Representatives Benjamin Agarao Jr. (LDP, Laguna) and Renato Magtubo (party-list Partido ng Manggagawa) said the ID system was not that harmless as advertised by Malacañang.

"An ID system can be used to crush the legitimate political opposition," Agarao said.

Magtubo, for his part, said the ID system was the "first building block in the infrastructure to monitor the people's political activities."

"Civil liberties is what is at stake," Magtubo said.

Even administration Rep. Faysah Dumarpa (Lakas, Lanao del Sur) is wary about the dangers of an ID system.

"I'm afraid that Muslims, who are the usual scapegoats, will be the first targets," said Dumarpa, chair of the House committee on social services.

'Hiding something'

In Kidapawan City, Sen. Rodolfo Biazon said groups opposed to the passage of the antiterrorism bill could be hiding something.

"Perhaps they are protecting the terrorists that is why they are against the passage of the bill … and to divert attention, they blame the government for the terror attacks all over the country," Biazon said over radio station dxND.

Biazon said the bill was meant to prevent groups out to sow terror.

But Percidita Acosta, Chief of the Public Attorney's Office (PAO), said the antiterror bill should be dissected to ensure that the human rights of suspects would not be violated.

"What is important here is if the antiterrorism bill is passed, the antitorture bill is also passed. If the antitorture bill is passed, I could not see any problem with the antiterror bill," Acosta said. *With reports from Norman Bordadora and Michael Lim Ubac in Manila; and Jeffrey M. Tupas, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

GMA reviews logging ban order

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo will decide next week whether to lift the nationwide log ban she imposed after heavy flooding in Quezon and Aurora blamed on logging killed hundreds of people.

Ms Arroyo is reviewing the ban after the Philippine Wood Producers Association (PWPA) claimed that at least $130 million in domestic and international sales was lost after lumber operators suspended operations last December.

The President will make the decision when she meets the Cabinet next week, according to Communications Director Silvestre Afable. "A decision on this issue is forthcoming," Afable said in a phone interview with reporters.

PWPA vice president Evaristo M. Narvaez Jr. said a prolonged suspension had been harsh especially on legitimate wood-producing industries.

The association is made up of 223 wood producers who have sustainable forest management operations in Surigao Sur and Surigao del Norte, Zamboanga provinces, Agusan provinces and Isabela that account for 10 percent of total classified forest lands in the country.

Narvaez said the group's base of operations was far from Quezon province.

If the log ban is not lifted, Narvaez said the industry would close down wood processing plants, which could lead to the termination of two million jobs and loss of P20 billion in new investments and P21 billion in annual exports of high-valued added finished wood products.

Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

Floating logs missing, says Madrigal

From page A1

awarded to a small company the contract to "gather all the logs" in Aurora and Quezon without public bidding, according to Madrigal.

She identified the firm as Kasivo, which has a paid-up capital of P250,000.

"Kasivo was given [a contract] without public bidding, which is against COA [Commission on Audit] regulations. That's why we are surprised," Madrigal said.

Reached for comment, Environment Secretary Michael Defensor said the logs Madrigal was looking for had already been "'processed" by Kasivo into panels and boards and were kept in its warehouse for later distribution among the affected local governments and national agencies doing rehabilitation work in the calamity areas.

He recalled that as per DENR's count, around 7,000 pieces of heavy logs—those with a diameter of 30 inches or more—were retrieved from the shores of Aurora and Quezon.

Local residents whose homes were destroyed by the floods were earlier allowed to keep the logs that were washed out inland and within their property, he said. "They were not given the logs that were floating along the beaches."

Defensor maintained that there was nothing illegal with the DENR's arrangement with Kasivo—but also gave apparently conflicting profiles of the sawmill which the DENR tapped to "retrieve" the logs.

First, Defensor explained that Kasivo got the job because it was the "only legal sawmill" operating in the calamity-stricken areas in Quezon. Choosing Kasivo was a "collective decision" of the DENR, local governments and wood-based cooperatives.

But later in the interview, he said Kasivo was one of the entities which the DENR charged with illegal logging on Feb. 2 before the Department of Justice. The DENR has a witness tagging the sawmill as an alleged buyer of illegally cut timber, he said.

The decision to give Kasivo the retrieval contract was made around the second week of January, while the witness implicating the company as a "hot logs" buyer surfaced two weeks later, he said.

"If there's an anomaly in the agreement, would we still charge Kasivo? I dare anyone to prove that there's corruption in that," he said in a phone interview.

Defensor said Kasivo would get "30 percent" of the retrieved logs, which have a diameter of 30 inches or more. The rest of the logs will go to the local governments to be used for the reconstruction of school buildings, health centers and the homes of affected families.

Pressed why the DENR continued to honor the agreement with Kasivo even after the sawmill was charged with illegal logging, Defensor said: "What I'm saying for now is a statement of fact. Whether (the filed case) will have an effect on the previous agreement is still being studied by our legal department."

He noted, however, that Kasivo had yet to get its 30-percent share of the heavy logs.

Defensor justified DENR's decision not to bid out the contract to "fast-track" the retrieval operations, saying the bidding process "could take up to four months, and by then all the logs would be lost to logging syndicates."

Senate President Franklin Drilon has vowed to convene the Senate into a "committee of the whole" to look into this and other alleged anomalies committed by environment officials and personnel, according to Madrigal.

"We are going to investigate why it was given [a contract] without public bidding when this is national patrimony," she said. "It was given a contract, but there's no inventory. We don't know what happened."

Madrigal had locked horns with Defensor over differences in the government campaign to protect the environment. She sued him for libel for insinuating that her family had been engaged in illegal logging, among others.

"Whatever money I should get [from the P100-million libel suit] will go to the people of Aurora and Quezon," she said.

Madrigal also opposed plans by the reforestation czar, retired Brig. Gen. Victor Corpus, and a group of Chinese businessmen to import three million seedlings of the fast-growing Paolonian trees from China as part of the government's reforestation program.

"I prefer to use indigenous fast-growing trees. When you introduce something that is not indigenous to a country, the environmental equilibrium is somewhat destroyed," she said.

Citing a study by the University of Chicago, the senator said Paolonian trees were "invasive species," which could destroy the flora and fauna in the country.

Palace 'invites' gov't employees to Edsa rites

By Norman Bordadora

MALACAÑANG has asked government agencies to round up warm bodies who will attend the pre-Edsa I anniversary rally against graft and corruption at the People Power Monument along Edsa.

The Office of External Affairs has sent letters to government agencies requesting for support.

The administration-organized rally this afternoon is one of the activities scheduled to mark the 19th anniversary of the first "people power" revolt that toppled the Marcos dictatorship.

"A mobilization of 30,000 people at the Edsa People Power Monument on Feb. 22, 2005 from 12 p.m. to 7 p.m. shall serve as one of the highlights of this year's commemoration [of Edsa One]," said OEA Secretary Edgardo Pamintuan in a letter dated Feb. 15 to heads of government offices.

The Palace agency's "request" drew criticisms from the Confederation for the Unity, Recognition and Advancement of Government Employees, which accused the administration of hauling people "*hakot*" to project popular support for it.

"The Arroyo administration for fear of another low turnout in this year's Edsa anniversary has again exhibited its moral bankruptcy to govern by forcing government employees and other project beneficiaries to join in tomorrow's rally," said Ferdinand Gaite, president of the militant group of government employees.

"In truth, the people there would be paid and given food. Others are government-project beneficiaries who are forced to join," he added.

Mobilization

Gaite said the rally could be the government's counter to the demonstrations mounted by militant groups and opposition leaders against the proposed increase in the value-added tax on Feb. 16.

Courage received reports that Malacañang, through the OEA, had sent letters to departments and agencies, such as the National Housing Authority, Department of Social Welfare and Development, Department of Labor and Employment, and local government units to mobilize project beneficiaries, indigents and other sectors to attend the event.

The NHA immediately complied with the "request" by requiring its district managers in Metro Manila to mobilize at least 60 project beneficiaries from each "sector."

"Pursuant to the instructions of the General Manager, you are hereby directed to undertake the mobilization of our project beneficiaries [minimum of 60 participants per sector] for the said occasion," said a memo to district managers signed by Froilan Kampitan, NHA group manager in Metro Manila's area management office.

"Logistical support will be provided for the said event and the program office will coordinate the preparations for the same," the memo added.

OEA Assistant Secretary Danilo Consumido told the INQUIRER that Malacañang was not forcing government offices to produce people for this afternoon's rally.

Just an invitation

He said Pamintuan's letter was merely an invitation to a mobilization against graft and corruption.

"Everyone is invited. If [the members of Courage] would want to join, they are welcome," Consumido said. "I'm sure, [Courage] is against graft and corruption."

Courage was formed in 1986 with Consumido serving as founding chair.

The official denied that the OEA promised "logistical support" for snacks for those who would attend. "There was nothing to that effect in our letter," he said.

Regained RP . . .

From page A1

Aquino took her oath on Feb. 25, 1986 as the first duly elected President since Marcos was reelected in 1969. Marcos had stayed in power until 1986 on the strength of martial law that he declared in September, 1972.

Pray for peace

"It is good for us to commemorate the Edsa anniversary. Let us commemorate it by praying again for peace in our country and for the whole world," Aquino said Saturday during a visit to the Carmelite convent in Quezon City.

At the height of the Edsa uprising, she sought sanctuary at the Carmelite convent in Cebu. She would pray at the convent many times during her six-year term and whenever her government was challenged by coups.

On Saturday, she attended a Mass for Sister Lucia, who was among the three children to whom the Virgin Mary was said to have made a series of apparitions in Fatima, Portugal, in 1917.

Sister Lucia died on Feb. 13 at the age of 97 in a Carmelite convent in Portugal. The two other children died much earlier.

According to Ms Aquino, Sister Lucia was "one of the lucky ones for whom the Fatima visionary made a rosary."

Rosary from Sister Lucia

Made of gray beads, the rosary was sent to her by Sister Lucia in 1986, right after Ms Aquino was elected president, through Sin, who is now retired.

Aquino finally met the Carmelite nun in 1992 after her term in Malacañang.

"I was privileged to meet her," the former President said, explaining that normally, Sister Lucia would only meet with heads of state and cardinals.

Aquino said she was with daughter Kris, her friends Mercy Tuason and Bea Zobel and Ambassador Howard Dee and his wife. Fr. Manuel Lopez, a Portuguese priest based in the Philippines, acted as interpreter for Sister Lucia.

In that visit, Aquino was told by the Fatima visionary that she would pray for her successor, President Fidel Ramos, who was elected in May 1992.

"I told her, but our President is not a Catholic, and she said, 'I know,'" Aquino said, recounting their meeting.

The (new) comer in Inquirer

From page A1

people, and affecting the shaping of those issues instead of merely standing by like a silent, scared witness.

It is being affected by the little lives of the little people who figure in "insignificant" stories, and doing something to make those lives a little easier, a little more dignified.

It is encountering some of the best writers in Philippine journalism, and learning from the way they use the language and exercise the profession.

It is being involved in the molding of young and new journalists.

It is giving stories and people the weight they deserve, and laughing at the balderdash of those who think they deserve precious space for their hot air.

Two years ago, I gave up a position as tabloid editor and went to Hong Kong to work in a broadsheet.

Good move, was the consensus of friends and acquaintances.

After about two years, I left Hong Kong and came back to Manila.

Friends and acquaintances were mostly aghast, particularly this close friend. "You jumped from the frying pan into the fire." Her voice dripped with disappointment, this friend who has a particular predisposition for bromides. She added another one for emphasis: *"Nasa banig ka na, lumipat ka pa sa sahig* (You were already on a sleeping mat, but you had to move back to the floor)!" The exclamation point was so palpable I felt a needle had pricked me.

No, I corrected her. From the mat, I moved to a bed. It's turning out to be a cushy bed.

No regrets

Hong Kong, paradise for shoppers of the globe, gateway to China, focus of free enterprise, home of one of the most fashion-conscious people on the planet, address of the most stressful lifestyle on earth, site of much of the most exorbitant per-square-foot of living and working space in the universe, preserve of some of the realm's most high-tech publishers, is in the minor league in the newspapering world.

So, while many friends and acquaintances were surprised, stunned, skeptical when this native returned to the Philippines and to small-time Manila media from the megalopolis of Hong Kong, I never wavered in telling one and all, as well as myself, that the decision I had made has put me right back in the thick of things of newspapering and, more important, made me glad I came back. I have no regrets, I also insisted on telling them.

Indeed, I brought home no regrets in my baggage from Kai Tak. I did bring some lessons learned in Hong Kong.

Lessons

I learned, for instance, how to put on a T-shirt under a long-sleeved shirt under a windbreaker under a thermal jacket, plus two pairs of shorts under a pair of jogging pants under a pair of denims, because the 30-minute walk home from work after midnight in the middle of Hong Kong winter was a journey in icy wind.

I learned to carry an umbrella a certain way—one hand gripping one end of the handle, the other hand gripping the other end just under the shade, and the entire device held close to the head and body and always down against the wind—because it was otherwise impossible to survive a walk in a Hong Kong typhoon. Still, I broke at least three umbrellas in one season.

I learned how to wash my clothes in a plastic pail in a tiny bathtub in a cramped standing-room-only bathroom in a microscopic flat in Hong Kong, which had no spare space for the smallest washing machine.

I learned how to sweep the floor of the flat and then hang my washing outside the trapdoor of a window in the bathroom while the rice was cooking on the stove and the flat iron was warming up, because I had to leave for work in 15 minutes.

I learned how to subsist on instant noodles for lunch and dinner and midnight snack because time was always of the essence. Cooking a proper meal—meaning rice and viands that should be good for at least three days—was a comfort attainable only on my day-off. Another day-off bonus was the waffle oozing with a choice of greasy peanut butter or greasy margarine, which was filling enough for a lazy meal, bought off the sidewalks of Ngau Tau Kok for HK$6 (about P20).

I learned that Hong Kong had the best public libraries in the world—each district had its own—stocked with the latest hard-bound bestsellers as well as classics, and the latest British and American magazines and cassette tapes. I could borrow four books, plus two magazines, plus a tape for three glorious weeks, from the Ngau Tau Kok public library just two blocks from the flat.

I learned the premium locations of the best bargains in "imported" brands, including ladies' handbags that looked and felt as good as the genuine items for one-fourth the original price, stylish pants that shrank at least two inches after a single washing, "hand-made" leather belts that disintegrated like soggy cardboard after a week, leather boots whose soles came off in the middle of the street after a month, and other goodies.

Hot items

I learned that Manila tabloids and broadsheets, including the INQUIRER, were a hot item in Hong Kong, the tabloids getting sold out before noon and the broadsheets before nightfall, especially on Sundays.

I learned that Hong Kong newspapers, including the English broadsheets, got hot and bothered over stories like stray dogs biting locals, a basketball collapsing during a game and injuring a player, the second highest official in the territory getting a new hairdo—which they treated the way Manila papers treat intensity-7 earthquakes and national elections.

I learned that Hong Kong, dream destination of many Filipino journalists, is a low-end location with only two major English broadsheets when likened to Manila with its manifold English dailies. A major full-color, multisection Hong Kong newspaper can pale beside the largely black and white Manila papers when it comes to newspapering and sheer style, and fine use of the language.

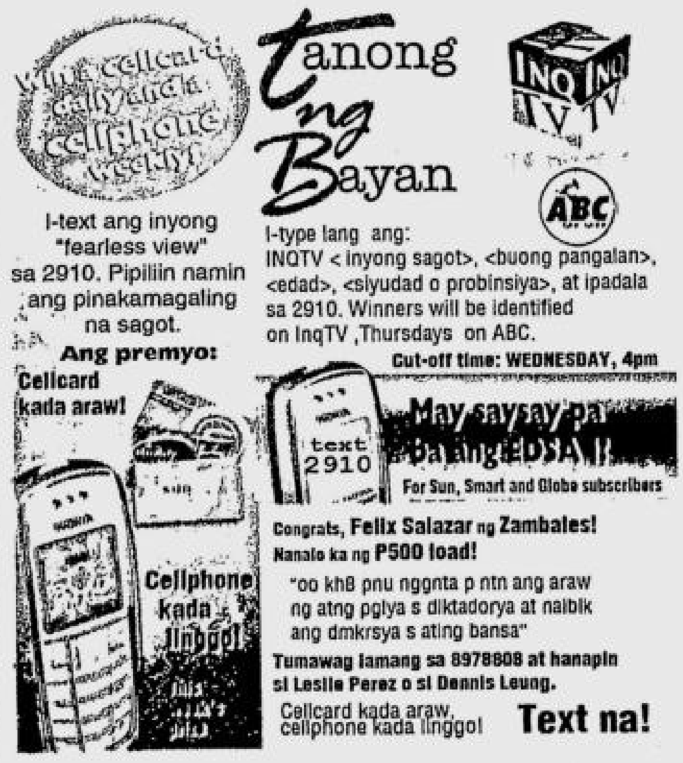
I learned that I missed Philippine papers, and Philippine newspapering.

Excitement

One thing I didn't learn in Hong Kong but which kept niggling me during my interminable exile—real newspapering. Everything I learned about newspapering, I learned in Manila, not anywhere else.

In terms of pay in newspapering, however, the peso of Manila is miserable loose change compared to the big bucks of Hong Kong.

But then, again, newspapering is not only about big earnings, or staying away from the frying pan *and* the fire. Newspapering is also about journalistic excitement and sheer style and often fine use of the language. It is also about involvement in the land and with the people. It is also about seeing the significance in insignificant little lives.



Tanong ng Bayan

I-text ang inyong "fearless view" sa 2910. Pipiliin namin ang pinakamagaling na sagot.

Ang premyo:
Cellcard kada araw!
Cellphone kada linggo!

I-type lang ang:
INQTV < inyong sagot>, <buong pangalan>, <edad>, <siyudad o probinsiya>, at ipadala sa 2910. Winners will be identified on InqTV ,Thursdays on ABC.

Cut-off time: WEDNESDAY, 4pm

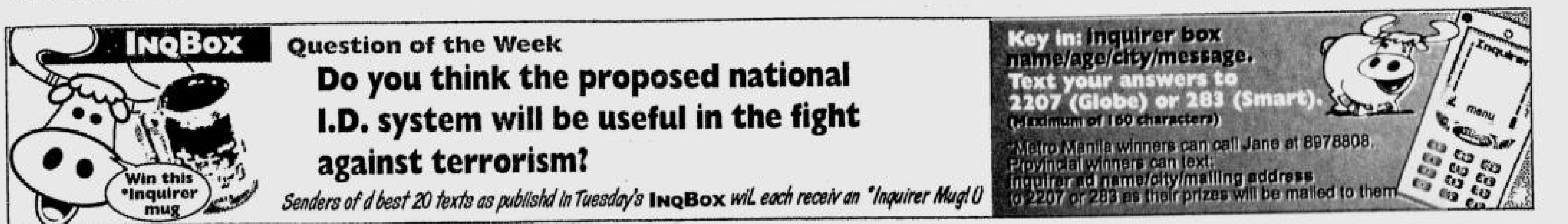
May saysay pa ba ang EDSA I?
For Sun, Smart and Globe subscribers

Congrats, Felix Salazar ng Zambales!
Nanalo ka ng P500 load!

"oo kh8 pnu nggnta p ntn ang araw ng atng pglya s diktadorya at naibik ang dmkrsya s ating bansa"

Tumawag lamang sa 8978808 at hanapin si Leslie Perez o si Dennis Leung.

Cellcard kada araw, cellphone kada linggo! Text na!



INQBox Question of the Week

Do you think the proposed national I.D. system will be useful in the fight against terrorism?

Senders of d best 20 texts as publishd in Tuesday's INQBox wiL each receiv an "Inquirer Mug! 0

Key in: inquirer box name/age/city/message.
Text your answers to 2207 (Globe) or 283 (Smart).
(Maximum of 160 characters)
*Metro Manila winners can call Jane at 8978808.
Provincial winners can text:
inquirer ad name/city/mailing address
to 2207 or 283 as their prizes will be mailed to them

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Wrong guy ambushed in Antipolo?

By Luige A. del Puerto

WERE THEY simply at the wrong place, and at the wrong time?

Police said yesterday they were looking into the possibility that the ambush of a state lawyer and a former corporal on Saturday in Antipolo City night might have been a case of mistaken identity.

Rizal Police chief Sr. Supt. Leocadio said the attempt on the life of Public Attorney's Office (PAO) lawyer Armando Cabalida did not appear, at the outset, to be a "setup."

Cabalida's companion, former Army Corporal Robert Neyra was killed in the attack. Cabalida was wounded.

"The lawyer got down (from the car) because there was no (satellite phone) signal," Santiago said. "So it was not a setup."

The police are also looking into the possibility that the assassination attempt could be linked to cases he had been working on in Caloocan City.

But Supt. Primitivo Tabujara said Cabalida had told him he has no known enemies. "The policeman was a friend," the police chief added.

SPO3 Raymundo Listangco of Caloocan City was traveling on a jeep behind the victims when the shooting incident took place. He might have responded in time to save Cabalida's life, the police said.

Tabujara added that the lawyer's land in Antipolo City was less than 200 square meters, something that was hardly worth killing for.

Police had said earlier that a land dispute could be behind the assassination attempt.

"One angle is that the armed men were not after them but after someone else," Tabujara said.

Nine people, including three security guards, have been released by police after they tested negative in a paraffin test.

School canteen issue not over

By Tarra V. Quismundo

IT'S NOT over yet.

The dispute over the management of the Lakandula High School canteen in Tondo, Manila, continues, despite a decision from the Department of Education (DepEd).

Private concessionaire Michelle Pineda, though ordered by DepEd to cease and desist from operating the Lakandula school canteen, was planning to bring her case to court, her lawyer said yesterday. "The DepEd order is not final and executory, because it was done without proper jurisdiction," said Pineda's counsel, Rosario Galit.

The lawyer said her client was set to file a petition before the court to prevent the enforcement of the DepEd order issued last week. The order declared null and void the contract Pineda signed with former Lakandula principal Alice Blas in August 2004, giving the concessionaire control over the school canteen.

The resolution, signed by Undersecretary Jose Luis Martin Gascon, ordered that school canteen operations be handed over to Lakandula's Home Economics Department, until the teacher's cooperative was reorganized. The order was given to the Manila Division of City Schools (DCS) for implementation.

To prevent the order's enforcement, Galit said her client would file within the week a petition for a temporary restraining order and injunction before a court either in Manila or Pasig City, where the DepEd's main office was located.

Invoking her client's right to "exhaust all legal remedies" to settle the dispute, Galit said they might even "elevate the issue to the Office of the President." She maintained the DepEd order was unfair to Pineda.

"The issue was whether or not Blas committed grave misconduct. Of course, it was necessary for them to pass judgment on the validity of the contract, but Pineda was never made a party, and was never summoned to air her side," Galit explained.

"We cannot reverse an order from the DepEd," said DCS Asst. Supt. Isabelita Santos.

Pineda's management of the canteen stirred controversy in the school. Teachers opposed the privatization, saying it deprived them of their right to manage the canteen.

Supreme Court
"PALCIFICADOR"
Supreme Court
Petron -at
Supreme Court
MAKASABWAT
ATTENTION!

ERIK ARAZAS

LONELY FIGHT
Protester Amanda Cruz in front of the Supreme Court all by her lonesome. Cruz is involved in a legal dispute with Petron over the property on which her gas station stands.

Fire drills in Metro

LAS PIÑAS City and NAVOTAS officials have launched fire preventive measures in preparation for the hot summer days ahead, and along with it, the threat of fires.

Navotas Mayor Toby Tiangco has directed the fire department, Public Order and Safety Office and the Public Information Office to supervise the drills.

"Preparedness is the best defense against any kind of disaster," said Tiangco.

"I hope that this campaign will help minimize, if not totally avoid, the damage and casualties from calamities that might strike our town," he added.

At the same time, Las Piñas City had been preparing for Fire Prevention Month. As in the past years, the Las Piñas City Fire Bureau has teamed up once again with the office of Rep. Cynthia Villar in its "Bantay-Sunog" campaign. Villar also called on her constituents to check their electrical wiring and LPG tanks on a regular basis.

Foes team up in fight over mall

By Luige A. del Puerto

EVEN BITTER rivals can set aside their differences when faced with a big problem.

Cainta Mayor Mon Ilagan has sought the help of former Mayor Nicanor Felix's municipal legal officer in the town's fight for control over the Sta. Lucia Mall.

Lawyer Abraham Asia, Felix's legal officer from 2000 to 2004, is now the town's consultant in a boundary dispute with Pasig City.

"I want to make it clear I'm still allied with him (Felix)," Asia said yesterday. "I'm helping the (Ilagan) administration out of loyalty to Cainta." He said his actions had Felix's consent.

Ilagan, in effect, reached out to Felix, whom he defeated in the 2004 elections, and promptly got the former mayor's help. The neophyte Ilagan ended the Felix dynasty's six-decade rule in one of the biggest upsets in Philippine politics.

Pasig City is poised to take over the collection of taxes from the mall after it won its tax collection case against Sta. Lucia and Cainta. The Court of Appeals affirmed the lower court's decision in January. Early this month, the Pasig regional trial court, which made the earlier decision, issued a writ of execution. Cainta officials insist the CA's decision is not "final and executory."

They plan to appeal the decision in the Supreme Court.

Justice Victorino retires

JUSTICE Raoul V. Victorino, one of the most respected members of the Sandiganbayan, retires today, after five years of a remarkable service in that special criminal court characterized by a "zero backlog" record.

Chief Justice Hilario G. Davide Jr., who considers Justice Victorino as a model jurist and zero backlog jurist, will preside as guest speaker in a "retirement ceremony" at 3:30 p.m. today at the Sandiganbayan to be led by Victorino's peers headed by Presiding Justice Teresita J. Leonardo-De Castro.

Former Senate President Jovito R. Salonga, founder and chair emeritus of Kilosbayan, and incumbent justices of the Supreme Court sent separate celebratory messages all centered on the integrity and achievements of Justice Victorino.

The justice was described as a deeply religious Christian leader, an incorruptible government official, and a dutiful husband and father.

Sick mother needs help badly

A 30-YEAR-OLD mother who has been diagnosed with a kidney disease needs help badly.

Clarissa Taruc, of Taguig, Metro Manila, worries not so much about her deteriorating condition, but about the future of her only child Veniss Cyra, who just turned a year-old this month.

Taruc, who works for an electronic company in Taguig, has been suffering from End Stage Renal Disease secondary to Chronic Glomerulonephritis, leaving only one percent of her kidneys functioning since August 2004.

A CT scan (computer tomography), which provides detailed views of the body's soft tissues, including blood vessels, muscle tissue, and organs showed that her kidney had shrunk.

Taruc needs some P40,000 a month to buy medicines and dialysis requirement twice every week. She also needs regular blood transfusion.

CLARISSA Taruc with daughter Veniss

A kidney transplant is the only option to keep her alive. Despite her condition, Taruc still goes to work everyday. She had to continue working to support her family and her exorbitant medication.

Her husband, Vener, a former waiter, takes care of their baby at home.

"I would like to ask kind-hearted individuals to help me cover the costs for the operation," Claire appealed. "I would like to live longer so I can see my dreams come true, and this includes seeing to the needs and caring for my year-old baby."

Kindhearted individuals who may want to help Taruc may contact her at cell phone number 0921-2903329 or office telephone 838-7454 local 2310 or e-mail her at clarissa.taruc@atmel.com.

She may also be reached through her friends' (Rey and wife) number 0919-4278016 and 837-8408. Or visit her at 4436 Mauling St., Camp Bagong Diwa, Bicutan, Taguig.

METROBRIEFS

Deadly dispute over illegal electric wires

ANOTHER dispute over illegal electricity connections claimed the life of a man in Manila on Sunday evening. Electrician Gregorio Casas, 32, was shot four times in front of his live-in partner in San Miguel, Manila, by his neighbor, identified only as "Wayda." The incident happened after brothers Fabio and Rodrigo Daprosa were shot dead in Tondo Saturday night after they checked out an electric post where illegal connections had been set up. Investigation by SPO3 William Gondranios revealed that Wayda had allegedly been setting up illegal electricity connections for his home along P. Casal Street in San Miguel, Manila. However, his neighbor, Casas would always remove the connections whenever he spotted them. Because of this, Wayda allegedly bore a grudge against Casas. On Sunday night, at 6:30 p.m., the suspect allegedly waited for Casas to leave his house. Spotting Casas, he drew out a gun and fired several shots at his neighbor. *Leila B. Salaverria*

Outstanding Mayor for Literacy named

ANTIPOLO City Mayor Angelito C. Gatlabayan is the Philippines' 2004 Outstanding City Mayor for Literacy and Antipolo City as Outstanding Local Government Unit. This is the third time that Gatlabayan won the National Award in Literacy, the first one in the year 2002, and the second one in 2003. The Presidential award is a recognition of Gatlabayan's work to educate Antipolo's native Dumagats, the out-of-school youth, the disadvantaged adults, the street children and other disadvantaged groups who needed knowledge and skills to earn a living. This award capped the celebration of the annual Literacy Week of the Department of Education (DepEd) through the Literacy Coordinating Council (LCC). The affair was conducted in cooperation with the Philippine Information Agency (PIA), other Government Organizations (GOs), Local Government Units (LGUs), the private sector organizations supporting the literacy programs, and with the participation of Non-Government Organizations (NGOs).

Customs seizes smuggled ceramic tiles

THE BUREAU of Customs Intelligence and Enforcement Group (EIG) under Deputy Commissioner Reynaldo S. Nicolas confiscated recently P3M worth of ceramic tiles from China in its continued fight against smuggling. The two containers of ceramic tiles were consigned to Indoplas Phils, Inc. with SRG Customs Brokerage as custom broker. The shipment was declared as 864 cartons of medical products. Upon inspection, the cargo contained mostly ceramic tiles from China and a few wheel chairs to conceal the smuggled items. The seizure was in line with President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's instruction through Executive Order No. 363 ordering the Bureau of Customs to combat smuggling in the country. At the raid were Customs Commissioner George Jereos; Deputy Commissioner Reynaldo S. Nicolas, OIC CIIS chief Jake Paguntalan and CIIS South Harbor chief Eric Albano.

Top customs brass humiliated in Cebu

ON TARGET
Ramon Tulfo

CUSTOMS Collector Billy Bibit holds his own kingdom at the Cebu port. He thinks he runs an autonomous port in the "Queen City of the South," free of interference from his superiors in Manila.

That's what Celso Templo, newly designated No. 2 man at the Bureau of Customs, found out yesterday when he visited Bibit's office.

Templo was appointed recently acting deputy customs commissioner for intelligence and enforcement in place of Rey Nicolas, who has been suspended. As acting deputy commissioner, Templo heads the powerful intelligence and enforcement group.

Templo, together with retired police chief superintendent Nestor Gualberto, chief of the enforcement and security service, tried to call on Bibit at his office.

The guards at the door to Bibit's office prevented the two high-ranking customs officials from entering. They said Templo and Gualberto didn't have any appointment with their boss. The guards still refused to have Templo and Gualberto to enter the collector's even after they had introduced themselves.

Apparently, the guards, whom Bibit brought in from outside, didn't recognize the two officials.

In fairness to Bibit, a former military officer, he scolded his guards after Templo and Gualberto had left. But it was too late. He had given his bosses from Manila the impression that he was arrogant.

Before Templo went to Cebu he called up Bibit, saying he was going to investigate reports of oil smuggling at the Cebu port.

Templo didn't have to do that—call a subordinate to say that he would come visiting. He could have gone straight to the Cebu port and made a surprise inspection without informing Bibit. Informing the customs port chief would have forewarned the smugglers.

But Templo belongs to a different breed of leaders. He wanted to inform a subordinate official about his presence in the latter's territory.

And for being overly courteous to a subordinate official, Templo was made to wait for 30 minutes outside Bibit's office.

Before yesterday, Templo did not believe stories circulating about the arrogance of people surrounding Bibit, people who are not even organic members of the Bureau of Customs.

The treatment Templo and Gualberto received at the Cebu customs port must have come as a shock to the second highest customs official. No customs collector had ever snubbed his bosses from the main office.

* * *

I welcome a libel case that Davao Oriental Gov. Maria Elena Palma Gil and her son Jaypet might file against me.

Palma Gil has threatened to file a libel case against me for saying in this column that she and her son were involved in illegal logging in the province.

The involvement of the Palma Gils in illegal logging in Baganga and Cateel towns is common knowledge in the province.

Hundreds of logs cut down from the forests of Baganga and Cateel find their way into ships anchored offshore in the two coastal towns. The ships carry the cargo to foreign destinations.

Just two weeks ago, a truck loaded with illegal logs was apprehended in Baganga. The truck was parked in front of the town hall. Ironically, the town mayor, a known Palma Gil protégé, is involved in illegal logging.

The vice mayor in Cateel, my sources in the province said, front for the Palma Gils in illegal logging.

Last week, a forestry official in the province said that the Palma Gils were being investigated for their reported involvement in illegal logging.

Santa banana, why only now? Illegal cutting down of trees has been going on for many years on the mountains of Baganga and Cateel.

METRO
E-mail: pr_metro@inquirer.com.ph
Editor Ester G. Dipasupil ■ Assistant Editor Cenon B. Bibe Jr.

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Text us your feedback: Inquirer met name/city/message to 2207 (Globe) or 283 (Smart)

Troubles with river pest may soon be over

By Luige A. del Puerto

IS A SOLUTION to the janitor fish problem in the offing? Laguna Lake Development Authority general manager Ed Manda thinks so.

A fertilizer company is interested in turning the fish, now largely considered a pest in lake and river systems, into liquid fertilizer, Manda said.

He added that the company, whose name he did not disclose, is offering to buy the fish at P10 to P15 a kilo.

Local governments along the Marikina and Pasig Rivers had launched a vigorous campaign to rid the rivers of janitor fishes.

Marikina, for example, is offering 20 centavos for each fish caught.

But Ferdie Marco, a city councilor, said they did not know what to do with the catch.

For now, the city simply dumps these in garbage sites.

Marco said there was a suggestion to turn the fish skin into shoe material, but since it was too thick, the idea was junked.

There was also a proposal to turn the fish into feed.

"We had sent samples to the Department of Science and Technology, but there has been no response yet," Marco said.

One company had suggested that the fish be turned into fish feed, but it added that the fish would have to be sun-dried before delivery.

"Drying the fish, however, could be a problem because of the foul odor," Marco said.

If plans to convert the janitor fish into fertilizer push through, that would be a welcome development, according to the councilor.

The janitor fish had virtually wiped out other fish varieties in the Marikina and Pasig Rivers.

It had also been blamed for the cracks that materialized in the jogging lane along the Marikina River.

Marcos said the janitor fish causes soil erosion because it digs into the soil of the banks.

The city's troubles with the fish started more than two years ago.

It is still not clear how the fish got into the Marikina and Pasig Rivers, but officials said they might have escaped from their breeding grounds in Pampanga, Laguna and Bulacan, and found their way to natural water systems.

Another theory was that pet owners tired of breeding the variety could have simply poured the fish into the Marikina and Pasig Rivers.

A sturdy species, the janitor fish survives in polluted and murky waters, which explains why they have extensively reproduced in Metro Manila's rivers.

Earlier, Mandaluyong City, portions of which lie along the banks of the Pasig, launched a fishing competition aimed at eradicating the species from the river.

PULIS
PULIS
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WPD
576

ALL SET
Western Police District Anti-Riot Squad members in arrow formation sharpen their skills during a training session at the WPD headquarters in Manila.
ERIK ARAZAS

Lines still form at MMDA for erring drivers

DRIVERS would still have to line up to redeem their licenses at the Metro Manila Development Authority main office after a Makati court yesterday dismissed the temporary restraining order filed by transport groups opposed to traffic schemes proposed by the agency.

Judge Cesar Santamaria, of Branch 145 of the Makati Regional Trial Court, ordered the dissolution of the TRO that began Jan. 28 and expired Feb. 17.

"The pre-trial shall proceed as scheduled, and the trial on the merits shall immediately follow," the decision added.

Despite the court ruling, MMDA Chair Bayani Fernando said that the Traffic Violation Receipt (TVR) policy would still be implemented, because there is no alternative policy that would penalize traffic violators.

The TVR is an old traffic scheme where violators could claim their confiscated licenses after paying fines ranging from P150 to P1,500, depending on the violation.

The licenses could only be redeemed at MMDA-designated redemption centers.

"We will not make any changes at the moment, but we are definitely coming out with a solution that would lessen the inconvenience," Bayani said. The MMDA was not inclined to opening additional redemption centers because doing so would be costly, he added.

Last month, transport groups filed a TRO to protest MMDA's three traffic schemes: the Metropolitan Traffic Ticket, Organized Bus Route System, and the No Physical Contact Policy.

Nancy C. Carvajal

BEST MUNICIPAL POLICE STATION
San Juan Mayor JV Ejercito receives the Best Municipal Police Station Award from the Philippine National Police, through Inspectorate General Alexis Canonizado, PNP Internal Affairs Service head. San Juan has also been adjudged the Most Peaceful Municipality in the country for the past four years. From left: San Juan Vice Mayor Boy Celles, Supt. Rodelio Jocson, San Juan police chief; Ejercito, Canonizado and Supt. Rey Gonzalodo.

SHOWER HEATERS
95
BLUE WAVE
ATMOR
BUILDERS CENTER
HARDWARE WORKSHOP
SM North EDSA Main
SM North EDSA Annex
SM Centerpoint
ACE Hardware
Bacoor
Baguio
Bicutan
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Cebu
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Dasmariñas
Festival Mall
Iloilo
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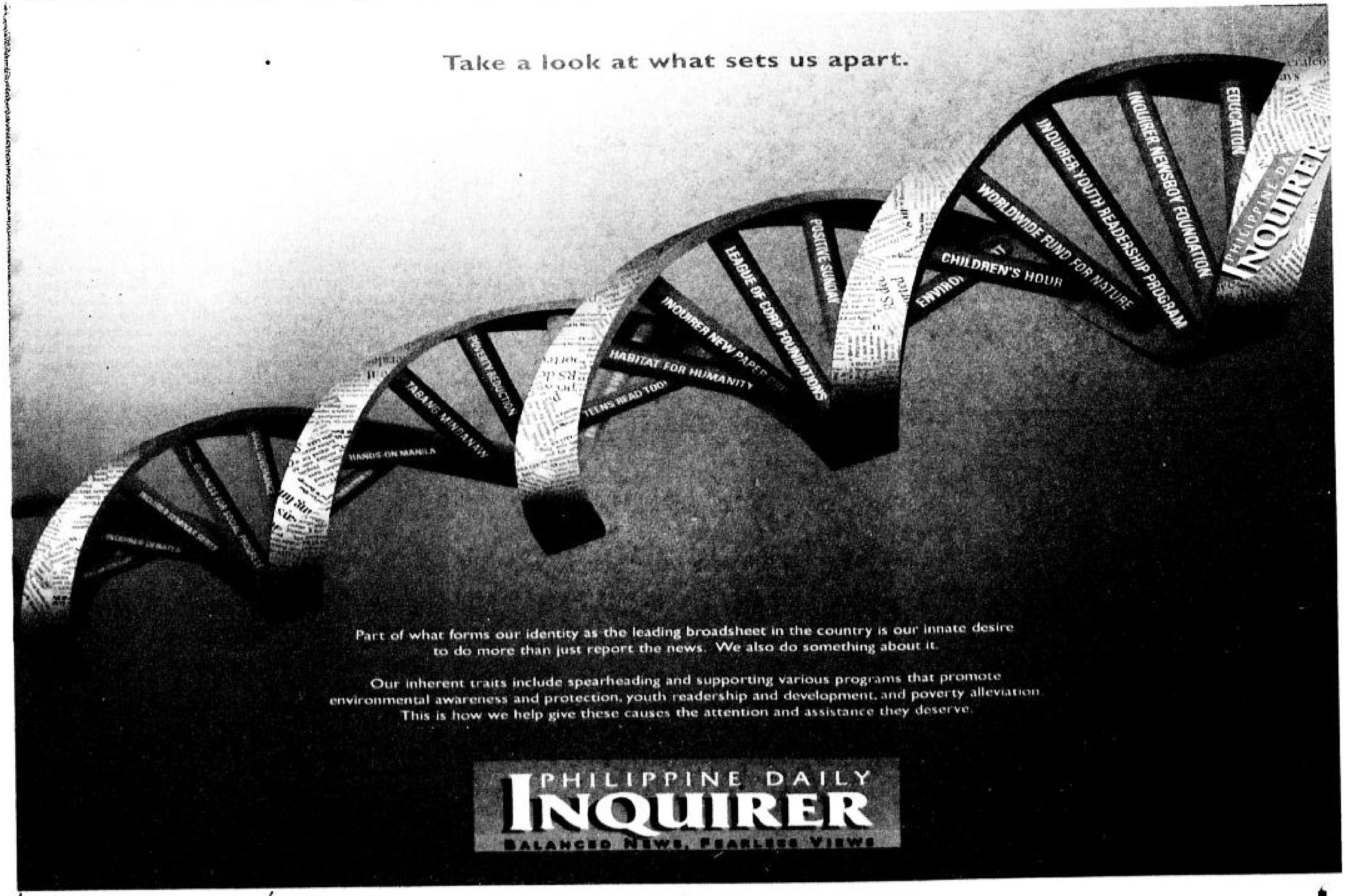
Southmall
Sucat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WORLDWIDE FUND FOR NATURE
CHILDREN'S HOUR
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Part of what forms our identity as the leading broadsheet in the country is our innate desire to do more than just report the news. We also do something about it.

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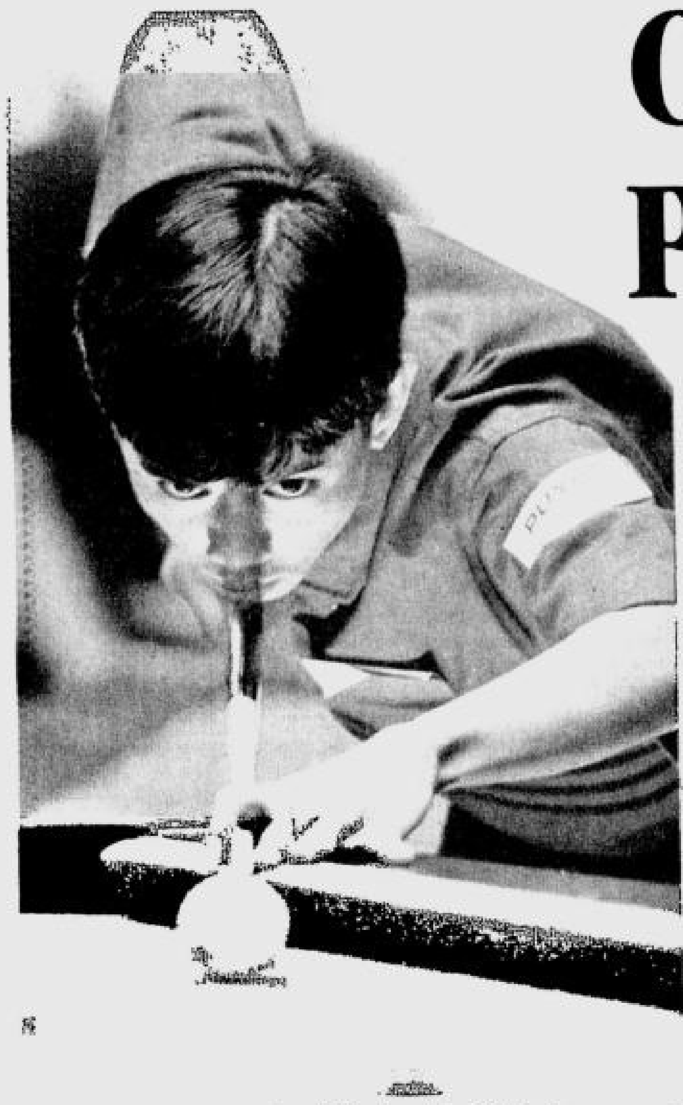


LEE Vann Corteza comes from behind to nip Luis Saberdo. AP

By Marlon Bernardino, *Contributor*

LEE VANN Corteza flirted with disaster before getting the break and surviving the first round of the Hope P1-Million All-Filipino Billiards Open yesterday.

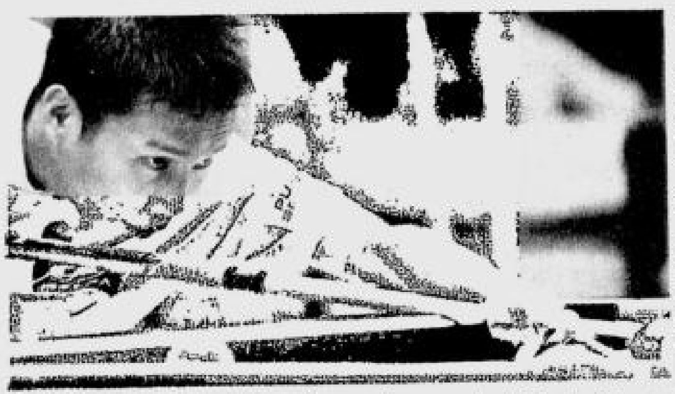
The 2003 Southeast Asian Games double gold medalist trailed going to the last two racks, but found relief when Luis Saberdo flubbed a pivotal shot and went on to score a shaky 9-7 victory at the Ever Gotesco Mall in Commonwealth, Quezon City.

Other first-round winners were reigning world champion Fil-Canadian Alex Pagulayan, 2004 Fil-9 ball titlist Antonio Gabica of Lapu-Lapu City and Gandy Valle of Davao City.

Pagulayan dumped Roberto Dy, 9-3, Gabica edged Warren Kiamco, 9-7, and Valle bested Leonardo Andam City, 9-5.

Saberdo, who teaches snooker at the United Arab Emirates, led at 7-6 but missed the right corner pocket shot on No. 6, allowing Corteza to clean up the table and forge a 7-7 count.

The 25-year-old Corteza then took the next two racks of the alternate-break format to advance against Angeles City's Rodolfo "Boy Samson" Luat, a 9-6 winner over Edgar Acaba.



WORLD champ Alex Pagulayan lines up his cue against Roberto Dy. AP

"*Suwerte lang nailigtas ko 'yong laro* (I was lucky to save the game)," said Corteza. "*Sobrang dulas ng mesa, masyadong matalbog* (The table was too slippery, it was too bumpy)."

Corteza surged ahead at 5-3, only to watch Saberdo take four of the next five racks that put him on the defensive.

Tayabas pride Jeffrey "Jeff Bata" de Luna, the youngest qualifier at 20, won via default over Marlon Manalo of Mandaluyong City."

Masamang-masama ang pakiramdam ko, parang magkakaka-chicken pox *ako* (I'm not feeling well, I think I'll be downed by chicken pox)," said Manalo, who sent his father (Claro) to inform tournament director Rolly Vicente that he couldn't play yesterday.

Still being played at presstime were the matches between Efren "Bata" Reyes and Carlo Viado and Francisco "Django" Bustamante and Joven Alba.

The tournament, sponsored by Hope, Talk 'N Text, Motolite, Café Puro and Emperador Brandy, serves as one of the qualifying rounds for the Philippine team to the 2005 SEA Games.

Organized by Puyat Sports boss Aristeo "Putch" Puyat and Jemah Television president Mark Roces, the tournament uses a race-to-9 double-elimination system where a player will be eliminated after two losses.

Meanwhile, Puyat announced yesterday that the top two finishers in the last 16 outside of Reyes, Bustamante and Corteza will qualify for the San Miguel Asian 9-Ball Tour. Originally, only the top finisher would gain entry to the series.

The champion of the tournament sanctioned by the Billiards and Snooker Congress of the Philippines gets P500,000.

SEA GAMES

Additional events questioned

By Jasmine W. Payo

THE LAST-MINUTE inclusion of events may be against the rules but Philippine Olympic Committee first vice president Monico Puentevella said it has been done by host countries before to boost their chances in the Southeast Asian Games.

"Since we are hosting, just like the other previous hosts, we must maximize our chances of winning and I'm optimistic that we can turn the tide or any ruling in our favor," said Puentevella. "We shall overcome any obstacle in the next federation meeting."

Puentevella had lobbied for additional events in three events—wushu, tennis and wrestling—during the Southeast Asian forum of the Olympic Council of Asia held in Ho Chi Minh in Vietnam last weekend.

The Bacolod congressman said Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Singapore supported his proposal, adding that 2003 SEAG host Vietnam had also pushed for the inclusion of 10 more events five months before the biennial meet.

A POC official yesterday pointed out that increasing the gold medals in wushu from 18 to 24 golds is against a SEAG rule that says except for athletics, aquatics and shooting, other sports in the SEAG program "shall not have more than five percent of the total number of events or medal tally."

Thus, each sport should not have more than 19 medals at stake since a total of 388 events had already been approved for the biennial meet slated Nov. 27-Dec. 5.

"As host, we are the ones violating the rules," said the POC official.

"There's also a rule that the events should be finalized 12 months before the Games. So that means, everything should have been set last November."

Rule changes, however, are allowed if at least eight member-countries agree to the amendment.

Puentevalla's proposal, which will be officially taken up in the next SEAG federation meeting in March, also called for increasing the gold medals in lawn tennis from four to seven and the inclusion of the Greco-Roman events in wrestling.

Meanwhile, Philippine Sports Commission officer-in-charge Butch Ramirez said yesterday that 43 athletes from wrestling, table tennis and sepak takraw will moving into new dormitories on Saturday.

"Their living quarters in Rizal is no longer fit for the athletes," said Ramirez. "They might get sick so we're recommending for their swift transfer."

No easy way for foreign-born cagers

WASHINGTON: First applicant

By June Navarro

FOREIGN-BORN aspirants seeking to join the 2005 rookie draft face a rough time before making it to the Philippine Basketball Association.

Aside from the voluminous citizenship papers they have to secure, the foreign-born draftees will literally go under the microscope from the teams themselves right after the final list of draft applicants is finalized.

The PBA board of governors recently passed a resolution allowing the 10 teams to confirm and contest within a 30-day period if a foreign-born applicant is eligible by league standards or not.

"This will give the PBA enough time to screen the (foreign-born) candidates and at the same time pass on to the applicants the burden of proving their citizenship," said PBA commissioner Noli Eala.

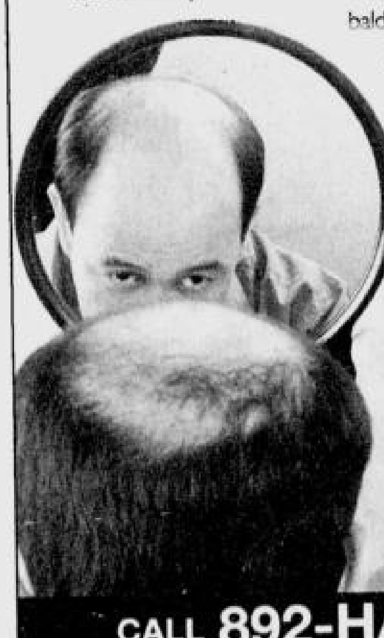
The foreign-born players will have until May 1 to apply and submit all the pertinent documents required by the PBA board for the Aug. 7 rookie draft. The PBA has set a July 15 deadline for homegrown players.

Welcoat's Anthony Washington and Michael Holper of Air Philippines in the Philippine Basketball League were the first foreign dribblers with Filipino roots to apply for the draft.

A hulk of a power forward at 6-foot-7, Washington is a potential top pick for this year's freshman lottery while the 6-foot-6 Holper could be a surprise choice among the rookie hopefuls.

Besides the usual Department of Justice confirmation and certificate of recognition from the Bureau of Immigration and Deportation, the Fil-fors need at least five more documentary requirements.

Each aspirant should have played at least 25 games in a local collegiate or commercial league before getting included in the final roster of draftees.



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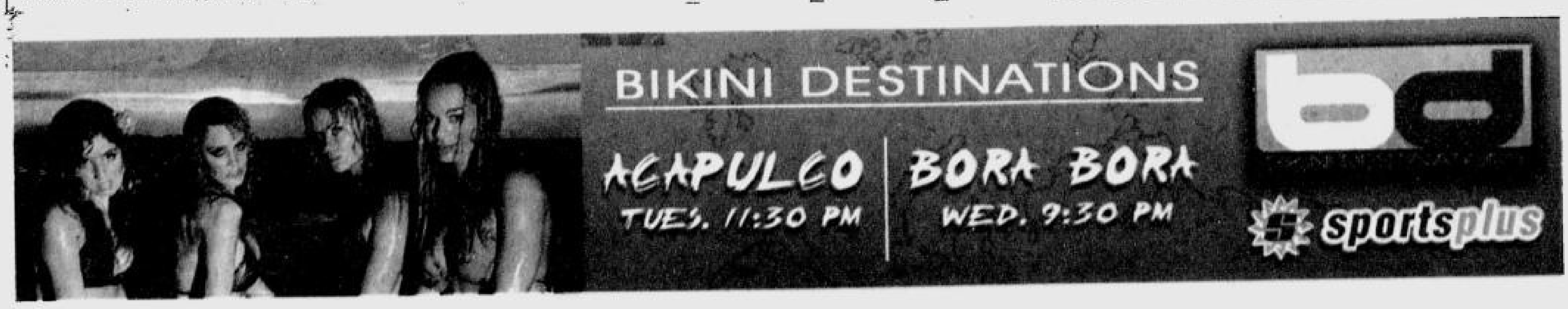

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Tamaraws test Maroons in C-League

THE GATECRASHER finally meets the host.

University of the Philippines, which only got into the tournament after De La Salle backed out at the last minute, has become the scourge of the 3rd Champions League after booting out three teams, including Ateneo.

Today, the Maroons try to extend their winning run when they take on seeded quarterfinalist and last year's UAAP runner-up Far Eastern University at 4 p.m. at the FEU gym.

The Maroons, who placed fifth in the UAAP last year, are displaying a brand of defense that is so far unmatched in the tourney sponsored by Petron, Smart Communications, Addict Mobile, Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office, Air21, adidas, Glaxo SKF, Wilson and Pascual Laboratories.

UP crushed Emilio Aguinaldo College (78-55), NCAA semifinalist Letran (52-41) and UAAP Final Four qualifier Ateneo (77-55) behind an aggressive defense that wore its opponents down.

"The boys are playing with a lot of intensity right now, especially in defense," said UP coach Lito Vergara of his team which is providing a preview of what to expect from the Maroons this year.

However, Vergara admitted that "we would need more than that against FEU."

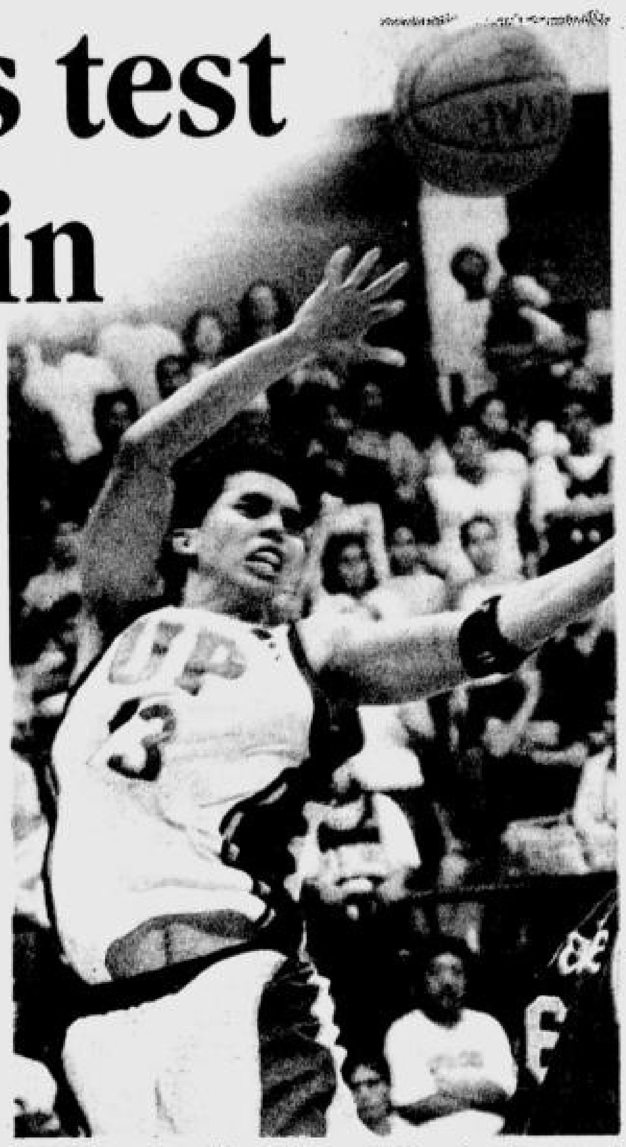
If the Tamaraws don't hold their punches—like what some of the teams appeared to do in this culminating tourney among collegiate league heavyweights—the Maroons are expected to face an uphill battle.

In the other match at 2 p.m., University of the East tries to ride on the momentum of its two-game winning streak when it battles 2004 NCAA runner-up Perpetual Help.

With rookies Mark Borboran and Nicasio Custodio, the Warriors downed the San Beda Red Lions (60-55) before thrashing University of Cebu Webmasters, 78-69, over the weekend.

Boasting of veterans Arwind Santos, Mark Isip, Dennis Miranda and RJ Rizada, vital cogs in FEU's 2003 UAAP and 2004 PBL Unity Cup crowns, the Tams face the Maroons as odds-on favorites

However, the FEU stalwarts may not be in top shape physically and psychologically.



JASON Cervantes will be a major cog for UP again today. PDI PHOTO

FEU won't have Koy Banal on the bench this time as the celebrated coach who steered the Tamaraws to the 2003 UAAP title didn't sign a contract renewal. Taking his place are assistant coaches Robert Flores and former PBA veteran Glen Capacio.

UP will bank on Toti Almeda, Marvin Cruz, Abe Santos, Nestor David, Jireh Ibanez and Josant Cervantes, who have also played in the PBL under Granny Goose Tortillos.

Almeda, however, is a doubtful starter in the tourney staking P500,000 worth of scholarship grants. He sat out the game with Ateneo due to a twisted wrist.

Marc Anthony Reyes

Int'l marathon theme of OTS photo contest

THE FIRST International Philippine Marathon for the Pasig River starting at 4 a.m. on Sunday will be the subject of an on-the-spot photo contest organized by the Federation of Philippine Photographers Foundation.

The contest is part of the Photoworld Cup for 2005 where camera clubs are expected to field in their members along the route starting in Intramuros and ending at Fort Bonifacio in Taguig City. Non-camera club members can also join the contest.

Participants may use either film or digital cameras and are required to enter 8X10 prints. Prizes are first P10,000, second P7,000 and third P5,000.

Truth hurts

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendoza

I AM not surprised that almost the entire Ateneo community is sulking nowadays. It's because Ateneo was eliminated in the Champions League in a most humiliating manner.

Only last Saturday, Feb. 19, University of the Philippines literally destroyed Ateneo via a 22-point winning margin. The setback ousted Ateneo in the you-lose, you-die format.

I couldn't believe it myself.

Not exactly the defeat but Ateneo losing that much to UP. Unbelievable.

To be sure, I am ecstatic over UP's win because I am a Maroon fan from way back. Even though I missed entering the State University as an—modesty aside—entrance scholar due to a major hitch caused by my being a *sanoy* (I missed my enrollment date, that's what), I have never lost my love for UP. In fact, my only son and only daughter are alumni of UP. The son even earned a Masters in Fine Arts at UP. And take this: My wife, lover and best friend, Sol Juvida, teaches literature at UP.

So, the one who says I am no Maroon fanatic talks Greek, is a geek.

But Ateneo happens to be also close to my heart.

The brother of my departed mother finished law at Ateneo and is a barrister in New York where he still lives up to now.

Some of my dear friends, like Fr. Tito Caluag, Rudy Salud, Ricky Palou and Prof. April Fernandez, are Ateneo fixtures.

Joel Banal, the former Ateneo coach, is a buddy of mine not only because I had covered his exploits as a deft point guard for the country in the Singapore Pesta Sukan but also because Joel's sister, our Lifestyle editor Chelo Banal-Formoso, is a comrade in the profession for decades.

Thus, I can be considered as someone being torn between two lovers.

Thus, seeing Ateneo get clobbered by UP also breaks my heart.

Always, I am happy for either one of them to win each time they meet.

But not the way it happened on Saturday, Feb. 19.

The rout wasn't only bizarre but highly inconceivable because Ateneo was no pushover in the league. In fact, the Blue Eagles had been considered as among the favorites to win the crown. If it had been a close game—which should have been the case, given the strength of both squads—it would not have caused that much hurt. But hello, how can one justify a 22-point loss, with Ateneo behind by 20 at the half? Ugh!

I asked around and I was told coach Sandy Arespacochaga did not schedule a practice the day before the game. I gathered some of the players had classes to attend to.

Classes or no classes, that's no reason to cancel practice.

And if true that there was no practice, it can be construed that Sandy took UP for granted. Bad attitude.

I submit that coaches differ in style. But to skip practice a day before a crucial game, why I think only a Phil Jackson or a Baby Dalupan is allowed that kind of luxury.

This could be cruel to Sandy, but his first three major stints with Ateneo were flops—dead last in the PBL last year, a not-so-memorable finish in the 2004 UAAP and another forgettable placing in the last PBL. And now this, the unceremonious exit in the Champions League.

Truth hurts. And the truth is, Sandy seems not cut out for the job.

The UAAP season might be 17 weeks away, but it would help if the scouting for a new coach could start now.

What do you think, Fr. Tito?

***

FASTBREAK. Tess H. Landrito of WWW Express wishes to express her gratitude to Shell coach Leo Austria and Shell assistant coach Dayong J. Mendoza, "for joining their players Ervin Sotto, Roger Yap and Ronald Tubid grace our Foundation Day on Feb. 11 at the San Roque Catholic School." Tess also thanks DHL chair Rod V. Feliciano, her boss, "for being always an ardent supporter of our school projects," and Jose Perez, Danny Chua, Yoyong Galang, Butch Lopez, Rico Millares, Lydia Ramos, Evelyn & Victoria and Mr. Agustin.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER TV GUIDE Tuesday, February 22, 2005

WEDNESDAY and THURSDAY 10 pm after Big News

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Channel	2:30PM	3:00PM	3:30PM	4:00PM	4:30PM	5:00PM	5:30PM	6:00PM	6:30PM	7:00PM	7:30PM	8:00PM	8:30PM	9:00PM	9:30PM	10:00PM	10:30PM	11:00PM	11:30PM
ABS-CBN 2				Showbiz No. 1	Sandara's Romance	Masked Rider Ryuki		Gatekeepers	TV Patrol		Spirits	Krystala	'Til Death Do Us Part	Hiram	Save The Last Dance	Bida Si Mister Bida Si Misis			Insider
NBN		Taiwan Winner TV Shopping		Value Vision	Teledyaryo	Value Vision		MMDA On The Road		Network Forum		Teledyaryo		Family Rosary Crusade		Paco Park Presents		Auto Focus	
ABC 5	Problema Nyo, Sagot Ko	KNN	Anime Ring Kasho		Anime Ring Kasho		Sentro	Lizzie Mcguire	Three Blind Dates		Wow Mali		Big News	The Probe Team Documentaries		Race Hour	Billboard On-Air		
GMA 7		Saang Sulok Ng Langit	Joyride	Glass Shoes	One Piece	Knock Out	Slam Dunk	24 Oras		Extra Challenge		Mulawin		Starstruck	Stairway To Heaven	Bahay Mo Ba 'To?			Saksi
RPN 9	Metro TV Shopping			Hey Arnold!	As Told By Ginger	Wild Thornberries	Sponge Bob	Entertainment Tonight	8 Simple Rules	Ripley's Believe It or Not		Crossing Jordan		John Doe		Newswatch Now	29th Street		
IBC 13		Lifestyle		EZ Shop		Home Shopping Network	IBC Express Balita	Pangarap Kong Jackpot		Linawin Natin		V League				Travel	IBC News Tonite	Up Close And Personal	EZ Shop
Solar		Wwe Raw				Mutant League	Heavy Gear	Maxsteel	Dungeons And Dragons	Stargate SG1		Soldier Of Fortune		RHD/LA		The Wire		Oz	
Nickelodeon	Blues Clues	Rugrats	Fairly Odd Parents	SpongeBob SquarePants	All That	Are You Afraid of the Dark?	100 Deeds of Eddie McDowd	The Amanda Show	The Adventures Of Jimmy Neutron	Fairly Odd Parents	SpongeBob SquarePants	As Told By Ginger	Nick Mix						Rugrats
MYX		Urban MYX	MYX Backtrax	Pop MYX	OPM MYX	Take 5	My MYX	MYX Daily Top Ten		Mellow MYX	Rock MYX	Pop MYX	Urban MYX	Top Of The Pops	MYX Remakes	My MYX	MYX Backtrax	OPM MYX	Mellow MYX
ETC		Last Comic Standing		The Today Show		Starting Over		NBC Nightly News	Entertainment Tonight	Will & Grace	What I Like About You	One Tree Hill		The O.C.		Tonight Show With Jay Leno		Elimidate	Change of Heart
Cinema One		Ang Erpat Kong Astig				Drama Studio Tunay Na Mahal				Aagos Ang Dugo				Cine Tonight: S2pid Luv				Ang Bang Meron Ka?	
Studio 23	Bewitched	Survivor: Thailand	MYX Backtrax					Ragnarok	Project Arms	Wazzup Wazzup	Fightbox	The Amazing Race 6		Smallville		News Central	The Oprah Winfrey Show		The Men's Room
AXN		29 Palms				Fear Factor		Samurai X	Samurai X	Beastmaster III		Ripley's Believe It or Not		Alias		The Contender			Maximum Exposure
Star World		The Bold & The Beautiful		Hollywood Squares	Home Improvement	Ally McBeal		The Simpsons	The Drew Carey Show	Star News Asia	Friends	Charmed		Wild Card		Manhunt		Friends	Charmed
CNN				Business International		Larry King Live		World News	World Sport	Business International		World News Asia		World News	World Sport	World News Asia		World News	World Sport
National Geographic		Thrill Seekers		Secret China		Built For The Thrill		The Snake Wranglers	Croc Chronicles Dr Brady Barr	Wild		About Asia		Nat'l Geographic Specials		Thrill Seekers		The Sea Hunters	
Solar Sports	IBF Yonex Singapore Open '04				FIVB Grand Prix Germany vs. Japan				ATP Open 13 2005				NBA Action	Hardwood Classics: Bucks @ Cavaliers '02					Basketbiography M. Johnson
Lifestyle Network	Secret Gardens	The Fixx	Mission Organization	Carol Duvall	Moto Mario	Hot Off The Grill	Good Eats	Extreme Cuisine	Unwrapped	Passion For Dessert	Guess Who's Coming To Decorate		Look For Less	Lifestyle		Clean House	Back To Basics	Road & Track	Back To Basics
HBO			Pontiac Moon (3:20 PM)			Swept Away (5:15 PM)				A Very Brady Sequel (6:50 PM)			Mr. Deeds (8:25 PM)	Six Feet Under S4: Tears, Bones And Desire		The Frighteners (10:55PM)			
Star Movies		Abandon (3:15 PM)				Rocky II				I Dreamed Of Africa (7:05 PM)				Home Alone			About A Boy (10:45PM)		
Cartoon Network	Scooby-Doo Show	The All New Popeye Show		Tom & Jerry Show	Baby Looney Tunes	Sylvester & Tweety Mysteries	Police Academy	He-Man & The Masters Of The Universe	Static Shock	Yu-Gi-Oh!	Shaman King	The Looney Tunes Show		The Powerpuff Girls	Codename: Kids Next Door	Mr. T	Josie And The Pussycats	Boomerang: The Superfriends	Yu-Gi-Oh!
ESPN		FA Cup Highlights		Big 10 Conf: Michigan State vs. Purdue				Big East Conf.: Connecticut vs. Rutgers				Sportscenter Taiwan	Pool/Snooker Mosconi Cup '04		Big East Conf.: Notre Dame vs. Connecticut				Sportscenter Asia
Disney Channel	Mr. Bean: The Animated Series	Totally Spies	The Sleepover Club	Art Attack/Unlikative Bunny	That's So Raven	Martin Mystery	Totally Spies	Kim Possible	Mr. Bean: The Animated Series	Lilo & Stitch/Unlikative Bunny	Land Before Time II: The Great Valley Adventure			My Wife And Kids	That's So Raven	According To Jim	America's Funniest Home Video	Princess of Thieves	
Cinemax			The Animal (3:45 PM)			The Scoundrel's Wife (5:15PM)				Cinema Secrets II Ep 13 Hanging By A Thread	Mad Dog And Glory			Dreamcatcher				Bopper (11:10PM)	
Hallmark Channel	Mad About You	Word Of Honor				Play With Me Sesame	Sesame Street		Bewitched	Judging Amy		Just Cause		I Do But I Don't			Hustle - 4 (10:35PM)		Judging Amy (11:25PM)
Discovery Channel		Civilizations				Wild Science		Ultimate Discovery		Rides		Human Discovery		Boys Of H Company		Ultimate Discovery		Science Mysteries	
MTV Philippines			Hangin Out at MTV		MTV Most Wanted		TRL		MTV Ask Drip	MTV Diyes		Carmen & Dave	Room Raiders	High School Stories	I Want A Famous Face	MTV Lokal	Whatever... Things	VH1 Video Collections	
Sports Plus					Pac 10 UCLA @ California Nat'l					Italian Serie A Highlight Program		Arena Football: Crush vs. Rattlers						Raceworld	
EWTN	Pope John Paul's Legacy To The Family	Angelus (3:15 PM)	Mysteries Of The Rosary	My Little Angels	Angel Force	The Holy Rosary With Mother Angelica and the Nuns Of Our Lady Of Angels Monastery	Fr. Groeschel	Catholic Morality & The Catechism	EWTN Gallery	The Journey Home		Does The Church Still Teach That	Lord, Have Mercy	Daily Mass		Angelus (10:15PM)	We Are One Body	Web Of Faith	

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Luisita swings for record 6th PAL senior crown

GARCIA: We'll win

By Musong R. Castillo

LUISITA, ending speculations, has decided to field a team for senior play in the coming Philippine Airlines Interclub, and Richie Garcia believes they have everything going in their favor as they chase a record sixth straight title.

"Fearless forecast? We will win," Garcia told the INQUIRER in a long-distance interview yesterday. He pointed out the Luisitans' rock-solid core and their familiarity with the two tournament venues.

"We remain pretty solid," added Garcia, a former commissioner of the Philippine Sports Commission who grew up and learned to play the game in Bacolod. "We will win this [again] at least for this year."

The Interclub starts with the senior tournament on Friday. Each team will have eight players seeing action for 36 holes with the top five scores counting on each day.

The nucleus of the team—Alex Montelibano, Carlo Gamban, Francis Gaston, Iggy Clavecilla and Garcia—is already in Negros Occidental, making sure that it is truly prepared to snare the record sixth win.

Gov. Tommy Joson of Nueva Ecija, Bong de Guzman and King Sumulong make up the rest of the lineup, which will be captained by former Rep. Jose "Peping" Cojuangco.

Cojuangco, who will be taking time out from his duties as Philippine Olympic Committee president and as a key official of the Philippine Southeast Asian Games Organizing Committee, assumes a post long and ably handled by Rudy Samson, who died recently.

Garcia, who now spends most of his time in Manila, said familiarity with the Marapara and Binitin layouts will be the key.

"We (the nucleus) practically learned the game in these courses," Garcia said. "Iggy, for one . . . knows these courses like the back of his hand."

Canlubang looms as the most logical threat to Luisita's dynasty after the addition to the team of Asian senior champion Tommy Manotoc and former professional Rolly Viray.

But Garcia is not awed.

"They (Sugar Barons) look to be one man short," Garcia said. "They need another solid player, someone like a Dave Hernandez to be able to win. And Dave will not be eligible for at least three years, I think."

Garcia first played as a senior for Luisita four years ago, when the Tarlac-based club started a string of championships unparalleled in senior Interclub play. It is a string that he feels will not end this year.

"If we are talking of only this year, we will win again," he said.

After a two-day break, the four-day regular men's tournament fires off with Del Monte seeking to retain the title it stunningly won over powerhouses Manila Southwoods and Canlubang.

SPORTSWATCH

Basilan netter advances in Milo tourney

ZAMBOANGA CITY—Lani Enriquez of Basilan blasted Pearl Ramos, 6-1, 6-0, Saturday to advance to the next round of the girls' 14-under division in the 2005 Milo Junior Tennis Cup and regional workshop at the Zamboanga City Lawn Tennis Association clay courts here. Enriquez was joined by Chrizanith May Helar, a 6-2, 6-1 winner over Noemi Damian in the Milo tournament organized by CTW, supported by adidas and sanctioned by the Philta. In the boys' 18-under play, Amping Benzon edged Jectofer Bijo, 7-6, 7-6; Lionel Locsin ousted Biboy Edun, 6-2, 6-3, and Ruel Damian nipped Alexander Hambre 6-4, 3-6, 10-4, to also gain the next round.

GCash-Powerbar riders dominant

GCASH-POWERBAR riders pulled off 1-2 finishes to take charge after the first two stages over the weekend of the 2005 Master's Cup Executive Cycling Road Race Series. British rider Chris Polard and teammate Leian Cruz made it 1-2 in the 71.82-kilometer stage from Angeles City to Olongapo City. Then Eric Carandang overcame a flat tire in the 60.55-km Olongapo-Angeles second leg to score the victory in the second leg, thanks to Cruz who held off a pack of pursuers in the last eight kilometers. The twin victories gave GCash-Powerbar the overall lead in the 14-stage series organized by the Greenhills Cycling Club and race chair Bobby de Jesus. Polard, a triathlete at heart, hung on with Cruz, a call center supervisor, in the first two uphill climbs toward Olongapo and was never challenged afterward as he took first-stage honors some 30 seconds ahead of his 26-year-old teammate. Carandang, a brand manager at Philip Morris, attacked along an uphill stretch in Porac, Pampanga, to top the second stage. In the elite division, Michael John David of Excellent Rice Noodles won Saturday's first stage against Tropical Ice rivals Jobert Cantina and Julius Calderon, before Tropical Ice's Raul Camba ruled Sunday's second stage over Danilo Ejercito.

Paragua-led Marilao heads MCC entries

THE MARILAO Mayor chess squad, powered by Grandmaster-candidate Mark Paragua, leads the early cast in the first MCC Amateur Chess Team Tournament slated Feb. 26-27 at J&F Divino Building on Aurora Boulevard in Quezon City. A cash pot of P70,000 is at stake in the Tempo Services Inc.-backed tournament that is open to all chess groups from government and the private sector, schools and universities. Other early entries are Minglanilla Tsunami, Triple Blocks, CMI Iligan Realty, several teams from Manila, Marikina and Parañaque, Darea, Malaya, Philippine Navy, Masbate LDS Chess club, College of St. Benilde, St. Louis HS-Philex and Avtrac Electronics. Each team may field three regular players and one alternate. The average standard NCFP rating of the team must not exceed 2000. A team can field a master who will play in Board 1 only. The alternate member must play at least three games.

Junio among faves in Largahan 5-cocker

FRESH off his impressive showing in the Roligon Mega Cockpit's Anniversary Derby recently, unheralded Bulacan cocker Jeric Junio has been installed as one of the early favorites in the Largahan 5-Cock Derby slated Feb. 26 and 28 and March 2 and 4. Junio, one of three Anniversary Derby champions, also won the three-door Mitsubishi Pajero after his prized Lemon Roundhead entry posted the fastest kill time of 13 seconds. This year's Largahan derby dangles a guaranteed prize of P1.5 million plus a Toyota 4x4 Surf for the fastest kill champion. "The Roligon management has decided to lower the entry fee to P4,400 to allow more small-time breeders to participate and gain much-needed exposure for their gamebirds," said host Rolly Ligon. Participants may submit their entries on Friday, from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. For inquiries, call 8332275, 8331638 and 8529812. Meanwhile, regular hackfights will start at Roligon on March 3 and every Thursday thereafter.

Pasig fastest-kill challenge slated

MORE than 200 entries are expected to vie in the One-Cock Ulutan-Fastest Kill Challenge set March 1 at the Pasig Square Garden. The fights start promptly at 7 a.m. Hosts Kags Paliza and Aba Badiola of Mandaluyong and Sam Mendoza of Rizal said the bulk of entries will be fielded by small-time cockers and backyard breeders. A guaranteed prize of P500,000 is at stake for an entry fee of P2,200. As bonus, the first 20 winners will get one mountain bike each and the first 20 losers, one sack of rice each. Likewise, the last 10 winners will receive one mountain bike each. The fastest kill champion will get P135,000; second, P70,000; third, P50,000; fourth, P20,000 and one six-cubic-foot refrigerator and fifth, P15,000 and 21-inch color TV. Prizes are also at stake for the sixth to 30th winners, as well as the slowest win and last fight winners. A six-digit display timer will be used. For cockhouse reservations, call 6465858, 0918-9251121 or 0921-5191962.

CAGING CLINIC: RP-Cebuana Lhuillier basketball team assistant coaches Boycie Zamar and Paul Advincula conducts a two-day basketball clinic in Daet, Camarines Norte. The event was held recently in coordination with Basketball Association of the Philippines commissioner for Camarines Norte Dr. Abundio Palencia. The two mentors also held a separate class on basketball coaching.

Ateneo, La Salle booters again share top honors

ATENEO and De La Salle prevailed in heart-stopping penalty shoot-outs to retain their respective UAAP football titles at the Blue Eagles field Sunday.

LA SALLE'S Maria Clarissa Lazaro (center) attacks the gritty UP defense late in the second half of their championship match. The agile Lazaro went on to win Rookie of the Year honors.

The Lady Archers and the University of the Philippines Lady Maroons played to a scoreless draw in regulation before La Salle kept the women's crown with a 3-0 decision in the shoot-out.

The Eagles won a second straight men's title after getting away with a 9-8 decision over Santo Tomas in a protracted exchange of penalty goals.

"We have fulfilled the promise," said Ateneo coach Ompong Merida. "This is the fruit of all the hard work we've put in since last year.

"We knew UST would give it all because they knew they were facing the defending champions. But we held through and we came out No. 1 again."

After a 1-1 standoff in regulation, the game went into extra time that failed to yield a goal.

The shoot-out, which ended at dusk, saw the first eight players on each side converting their attempts.

After Matthew Jaucian's goal pushed Ateneo ahead, 9-8, UST missed the equalizer as Mark Oliver Undag's shot bounced off the crossbar.

La Salle mowed its way through its last three elimination assignments by a combined 14-1 score and went into the finals enjoying a twice-to-beat edge like Ateneo.

But UP, which lost to the Lady Archers, 4-0, in their second-round meeting, gallantly held the defending champions to a scoreless draw to force the shoot-out.

That's where the battle-tested character of coach Hans Smit's team came to the fore.

Stephanie Pheasant, Betina Yang and Queenie Abelardo struck for La Salle and goalkeeper Lourdes Navarro saved two shots to end UP's run.

"It's been a great run for us," said Smit. "UP forgot about how we routed them the last time and played really great this time.

"I think in the end, our experience enabled us to win. We've been here before and my team knows what it takes to win."

Pheasant won the Most Valuable Player award and best defender trophy in women's play.

Her teammate, Maria Clarissa Lazaro, took home Rookie of the Year honors.

Ateneo's Patrick Ozaeta, meanwhile, bagged the MVP trophy in the men's division while Jason Cordova of Far Eastern University was named Rookie of the Year.

OPBF champ Laurente in high spirits

ORIENTAL and Pacific Boxing Federation lightweight champion Dennis Laurente is confident of retaining his title in his defense against Japan's Chikashi Inada on March 5 in a grudge rematch set at the famous Korakuen Hall in Tokyo.

Mario Lumacad, who trains the once-beaten southpaw Laurente of the Johnny Elorde Stable, said his ward is primed and ready for the rematch, and has already racked up more than 70 rounds of sparring against different rivals at the Elorde Gym in Parañaque.

"*Puspusan talaga ang ensayo namin* (We've been training so hard for this fight)," said Lumacad. *Alam namin na ensayado din 'yung Hapon* (We know the Japanese also trained well)," said Lumacad.

The Iloilo-born Laurente, who is also ranked No. 6 by the World Boxing Council, will stake his 21-1-4 (11 KOs) win-loss-draw record against Inada, who will go into the fight with a 16-2 (12 KOs) ledger.

The quick-moving Laurente beat Inada by majority decision in his third OPBF title defense last Oct. 2.

The Filipino champ won the OPBF title with a unanimous verdict over Yosuke Otsuka in November 2001 in Nagoya. He defended it for the first time against Indonesia's Ferdinand before figuring in a 12-round draw with compatriot Fernando Montilla in his second defense in 2003.

Laurente and Lumacad, along with manager Johnny Elorde and Filipino judge Edwin Sese, are slated to leave for Japan in the first week of March. *Salven L. Lagumbay, Contributor*

RACING TIPS

AT SLLP BY MR. 999

Race 1—1. Join the Saints 2. Gabriela 3. All Class 4. Dynamic JL
Race 2—1. Feng Shui 2. Ancestral Home 3. Wabtied Forever 4. Loaded
Race 3—1. Queen of D Jungle 2. Privately Owned 3. Raise D Sun
Race 4—1. Kilimanjaro 2. Fair Urduja 3. Uncle/Double Your Bet 4. Sincerity 5. Secret Agent 6. Besame Mucho
Race 5—1. Jungle King 2. Mini Skirt 3. Player's Twist
Race 6—1. Coolmore 2. Do It David 3. Red Bells 4. Conglomerate 5. Seniority
Race 7—1. She Boom 2. Sir Olizon 3. Play It Again 4. Mr. Speaker
Race 8—1. Calvin's Magic 2. Speed Admiral 3. Doctor Steve 4. American Inggo 5. Shure Bull 6. Secret Quest/Best Hand

Velodrome cycling challenge set next month at Amoranto

THE AMORANTO Velodrome in Quezon City comes to life beginning next month with the staging of the first Philippine Velo Challenge, a track cycling competition geared to drum up interest for the sport in the 23rd Southeast Asian Games.

The country's elite (national team) riders, the up-and-coming juniors (under-18), women (national team), veterans (Tour and national team), executives and masters (40 years old and above) will vie in the 10-Sunday competition sanctioned by the national cycling federation, PhilCycling.

Bert Lina, president of PhilCycling and the incoming Customs commissioner, has included the Velo Challenge in the association's year-long program—the others being road and mountain bike—that culminates with the country's hosting of the SEAG in November and December this year.

The Quezon City government, under Mayor Sonny Belmonte, is expected to support the endeavor that will be staged in the country's only velodrome—and one of only four such facilities in the whole of Southeast Asia.

The Philippine Sports Commission, through officer-in-charge William Ramirez, has also vowed to speed up renovation of the velodrome in coordination with the Quezon City government.

At least 84 cyclists will be divided into six teams (mixed membership) for the Velo Challenge that will feature competitions in both the individual and team categories. Practically all events in track racing—sprint, pursuit, massed start, Madison, Keirin, elimination, among others—are in the Velo Challenge calendar.

The races are tentatively set for March 6, 13 and 20; May 1, 8, 15, 22 and 29; and June 5 and 12. There are no races in April to give way to the Tour Pilipinas.

HOPE
P1-MILLION
ALL-FILIPINO
OPEN

SCOREBOARD

Yesterday's Results

Won	Lost
L. Corteza	L. Saberdo
A. Pagulayan	R. Dy
A. Gabica	W. Kiamco
G. Valle	L. Andam
R. Samson	E. Acaba
E. Reyes	C. Viado

Watch the action LIVE on IBC 13
Feb. 21-27, 2005
8:00-10:30 pm
JEMAH

Today's Games

A. Pagulayan	vs.	G. Valle
De Luna	vs.	F. Bustamante
M. Manalo	vs.	J. Alba
L. Andam	vs.	R. Dy
A. Gabica	vs.	E. Reyes
W. Kiamco	vs.	C. Viado

HOPE
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Iverson gets 2nd MVP as East shades West

IVERSON: The smallest stands tallest. AP

DENVER, Colorado—Allen Iverson registered 15 points and 10 assists to win his second career MVP award and power the East to a 125-115 win over the West in the National Basketball Association All-Star Game on Sunday.

It was first time since 1981 the NBA showcase affair had failed to produce a 20-point scorer.

"I didn't get the attention that I usually get and it makes it that much easier for me," said Iverson, who scored an NBA season-high 60 points against the Orlando Magic on Feb. 12.

In an All-Star Game that featured seven players 25 or younger Iverson stood out.

The NBA scoring leader, Iverson tried to make his impact in other ways than scoring. He shot a modest four-of-14, but handed out 10 assists and collected five steals in a game that had little defense.

Iverson, the superstar guard of the Philadelphia 76ers, also was crowned All-Star MVP in 2001, the last time the East had won the mid-season classic.

He scored 25 points to go along with five assists and four steals in 27 minutes.

In the second quarter, Iverson was the floor general as the East scored 17 straight points and used a 23-3 run to erase a 13-point deficit.

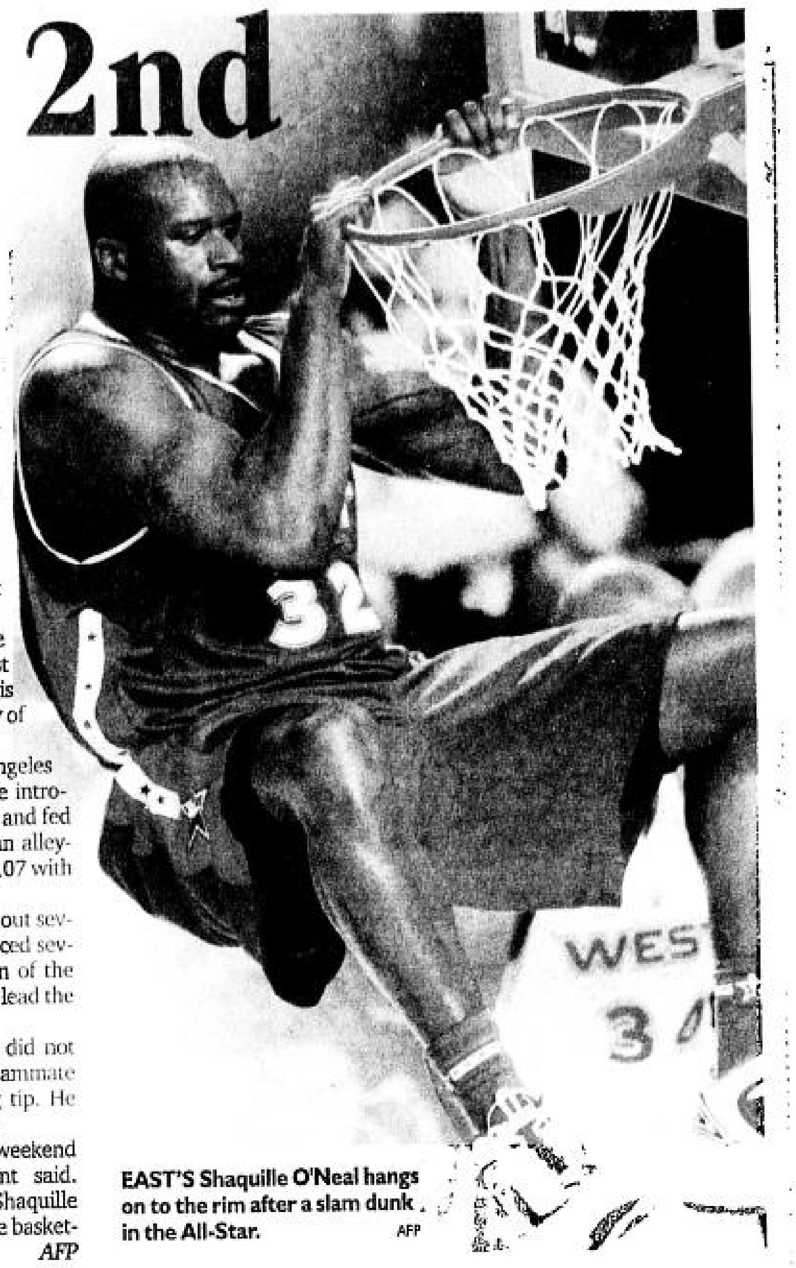
"I thought he was great because more than anything, he was the guy that just kept pushing other guys verbally with his energy," said East coach Stan Van Gundy of the Miami Heat.

Kobe Bryant, the star of the Los Angeles Lakers who was booed during pregame introductions, made back-to-back 3-pointers and fed a nifty pass to Amare Stoudemire for an alley-oop dunk to draw the West within 112-107 with 5:40 to go.

Bryant scored 16 points and handed out seven assists in 29 minutes as the West placed seven players in double figures. Ray Allen of the Seattle SuperSonics scored 17 points to lead the West.

Unlike his West teammates, Bryant did not shake hands with former Lakers teammate Shaquille O'Neal prior to the opening tip. He said all the rights things after the game.

"I'm not really going to make this weekend about myself and Shaquille," Bryant said. "That's just not fair. I obviously respect Shaquille tremendously for what he can do on the basketball floor and vice versa." *AFP*



EAST'S Shaquille O'Neal hangs on to the rim after a slam dunk in the All-Star. AFP

Dumars leads Hall of Fame candidates list

DENVER, Colorado—Former National Basketball Association Eastern Conference stars Joe Dumars and Dominique Wilkins were among the 16 finalists named Sunday for the basketball Hall of Fame.

The finalists also included NBA coaching legend Hubie Brown and former stars Maurice Cheeks, Dennis Johnson, Chet Walker, Bernard King and Adrian Dantley.

Nominees need 16 of 24 votes from the Hall of Fame Committee to earn induction.

Winners will be announced on April 4, during the NCAA Final Four—the semifinals of the US collegiate championship—in St. Louis.

The affable Dumars spent his entire career with the Detroit Pistons and now serves as an executive with the team. He was a key contributor to the "Bad Boys" squads that won back-to-back titles beginning in 1989.

A six-time All-Star and Finals Most Valuable Player in 1989, Dumars averaged 16.1 points in parts of 14 seasons.

Wilkins was one of the more prolific scorers of his era. Nicknamed "The Human Highlight Film" for his wild acrobatic dunks, Wilkins was a nine-time All-Star.

Wilkins, who spent the first 11 of his 15 seasons with the Atlanta Hawks, averaged 24.8 points in his career. He is ninth on the all-time points list with 26,668 . Joining Wilkins and Dumars as finalists in their first year up for consideration were coaches Van Chancellor and Sue Gunter, who were nominated by the Women's Screening Committee.

International stars Hortencia Marcari and John Issacs and Italian coach Sandro Gamba also made the ballot. *AFP*

Gordon clinches 3rd Daytona 500

DAYTONA BEACH, Florida—The last person Jeff Gordon expected to see ahead of him in a furious finish to the Daytona 500 was Dale Earnhardt Jr. When he did, "I thought it was over, done," Gordon said.

As it turned out, Earnhardt found just enough speed to scare Gordon, not to beat him.

Gordon grabbed the lead from Earnhardt three laps from the scheduled end, then held off Kurt Busch and Earnhardt in extra laps Sunday to become only the fifth driver to win three Daytonas.

It was one of the wildest finishes in the 47-year history of Nascar's biggest race. There were four lead changes in the last nine laps and two crashes involving a total of 17 cars in the last 20 laps.

Earnhardt, the defending champion, came from 30th with less than 160 kilometers to go to grab a late lead, only to see Gordon pass him seconds before a caution flag waved on the 198th of the scheduled 200 laps.

The race went three extra laps to finish under a green flag, and Gordon hung on to beat Busch by two car lengths.

"Oh, my goodness, what an amazing day," a jubilant Gordon said. "Three, baby!"

Gordon, a four-time Nascar champion, joins Richard Petty (7), Cale Yarborough (4) and Bobby Allison and Dale Jarrett (3) with three or more Daytona victories. *AP*

Scott ties Campbell in Nissan Open

ADAM Scott hits his tee shot on the 15th hole during the rain-delayed second round. AFP

LOS ANGELES—The Nissan Open is headed for uncharted waters.

After four days at rainy Riviera Country Club, no one has played more than 37 holes. And when rain suspended play a mere 30 minutes into the third round Sunday afternoon, officials conceded the possibility that the next hole anyone plays will be a sudden-death playoff between Adam Scott and Chad Campbell.

That's assuming they can find a hole that's not under water.

"We're going to make every effort to play," PGA Tour tournament director Mark Russell said. "We're going to come back in the morning, try to finish the third round and see how it goes from there."

Where the Nissan Open stood Sunday evening was baffling.

Campbell wound up getting the weekend off, which is golf vernacular for missing the cut. At the rain-delayed Nissan Open, that means he finished his second round Friday and hasn't hit another shot since then, not even on the range.

Scott rolled in a 20-foot birdie from the fringe on his final hole for a 5-under 66 in a second round that took him three days to complete. It put him at 9-under 133, tied with Campbell.

What happens next depends on the weather. The forecast is for heavy rain overnight and throughout Monday.

Players were to return Monday—only 12 of the 75 who made the cut teed off in the third round—and hope the forecast is wrong. The goal was to at least complete 54 holes so it could become an official tournament.

Otherwise, Russell said it could revert to a 36-hole tournament, the winner decided by a playoff.

The last time that happened was the 2000 BellSouth Classic, when the final round was washed out. Phil Mickelson and Gary Nicklaus went to the par-3 16th hole, where Mickelson made birdie to win.

PGA Tour events must be at least 54 holes to be considered official. And if more than half of the field finishes the third round Monday before more rain arrives, the tournament could carry over into Tuesday.

Needing a birdie on the 18th hole, Darren Clarke hit a 4-iron so pure that it sailed over the flag and over the green, and he had to make a testy 6-footer to save par for a 68 that left him at 8-under 134, along with Brian Davis (69).

Tiger Woods was only two shots behind until he butchered the 18th. From the right rough, he tried to play a fade around the trees, but the ball plugged into the left side of the hill framing the green. He flopped his pitch to 8 feet, and then three-putted for a double bogey that gave him a 70, leaving him four shots behind.

Woods' only hope to replace Vijay Singh at No. 1 in the world is for the third round to be completed, and for him to finish no worse than fourth. He was in a tie for 13th.

No one wanted to play more than Colin Montgomerie. Winless on the PGA Tour, Monty surged into contention with a 7-under 64, chipping in for eagle on the short par-4 10th and finishing his round off with a birdie to pull within two shots. J.L. Lewis had a 65 and also was at 135. *AP*

Jaidee: Asia's Player of the Year

JAIDEE: Sparkling season in 2004 AFP

KUALA LUMPUR—Thailand's Thongchai Jaidee has swept the four main honors in the Asian Tour's 2004 awards, including the Players' Player of the Year and Order of Merit titles.

On the day he successfully defended his Carlsberg Malaysian Open title, Thongchai was feted by his peers at the ceremony in Kuala Lumpur.

The awards followed a sparkling season in 2004 which saw him win two titles, the Myanmar Open and the Malaysian Open, and lift the Merit title with record earnings of $381,930 from nine starts.

The 35-year-old Thongchai said he was honored to be recognized by his colleagues.

"This is a great week for me," said Thongchai, who has now won seven times in Asia. His victory on Sunday put him back on the top of the 2005 Order of Merit with 4201,660.

"I am proud to be a part of the Asian Tour. If you look at Arjun Atwal, KJ Choi, Daniel Chopra, Charlie Wi and Kevin Na, they are all winners of Asian Tour events. Now they are on the US PGA Tour. I think that tells you that if you can win in Asia, you have a good chance to make it at a higher level." Thongchai said his immediate goals now were to win outside of Asia and also earn his right to play in the US Masters in April by breaking into the world's top 50. *AFP*

Amelie wrests title from Venus

BRUSSELS—French top seed Amelie Mauresmo wrenched a diamond-encrusted golden tennis racket from the grasp of Venus Williams on Sunday, when she beat the American, 4-6, 7-5, 6-4, in the final of the Antwerp Diamond Games.

Williams had been gunning for a third career title at the Belgian indoor tournament—one which would have bagged her the trophy for keeps—having won on both of her previous visits to Antwerp in 2002 and 2003.

But despite coming close, she led by a set and 5-3 and 4-2 in the third set, she was beaten for the first time at the event and missed her chance to end an 11-tournament drought without a title, the longest of her career. *Reuters*

MAURESMO

Carlsen grabs 1st ATP plum

MEMPHIS, Tennessee—Kenneth Carlsen claimed his first ATP title in more than two years on Sunday, defeating eighth seed Max Mirnyi of Belarus, 7-5, 7-5, in the final.

The unseeded Dane had advanced Saturday when top seed Andy Roddick withdrew from the tournament with an ankle injury, and he made the most of his opportunity against Mirnyi.

He earned his third career title and his first since Tokyo in 2002 which was also his last appearance in a final.

"This one and Tokyo is something special," Carlsen said. "When you win a tournament it's always somehing special. It's amazing. That's what you worked for. It makes everything worthwile." A sprained left ankle forced Roddick to withdraw from his semifinal, and Carlsen was much fresher than Mirnyi, who had long matches all week and competed in doubles.

The match was 5-5 in the opening set when Carlsen converted his second break point of the game by attacking the net and hitting a backhand volley winner. He won the next four points to close out the set, punctuating it with an ace on set point. *AFP*

Federer regains reputation

FEDERER: It's a crucial victory for the future. REUTERS

ROTTERDAM, Netherlands—Six years after making his debut in the event as a precocious blond-haired teenager, Roger Federer finally triumphed at the World Indoor Tournament on Sunday to restore his dented reputation.

The blond hair is long gone but his win over Ivan Ljubicic helped the Swiss silence any detractors who might have thought 2005 would prove to be a season of anti-climax following his shock loss to Marat Safin at last month's Australian Open.

"I was aware that if I lost a very close match again, losing in the breaker, people would have been quick to say 'he's lost his invincibility,'" said Federer after beating the Croatian, 5-7, 7-5, 7-6, in the final.

"I was playing for a lot today and I'm very happy I came through because it's a crucial victory for the future." Federer went down to Russian Safin in the semifinal at Melbourne Park despite holding a match point.

He was aware he could not afford to slip up again if he is to hold on to the aura he has built around himself after claiming 11 titles, including three Grand Slams, during 2004.

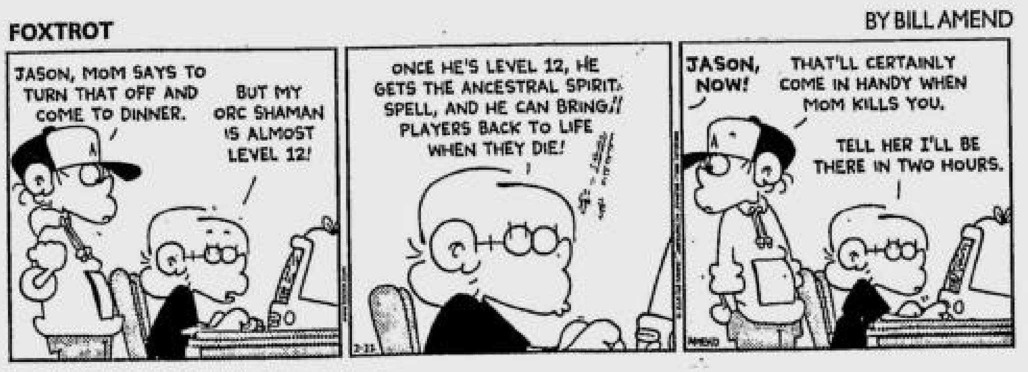
Sunday's triumph also extended his winning streak in finals to 15, his last defeat coming in a title match back in July 2003 in Gstaad.

It is a feat he is extremely proud of and one he wants to extend for as long as possible.

"I don't know where the secret of winning comes from," said the top seed. *Reuters*

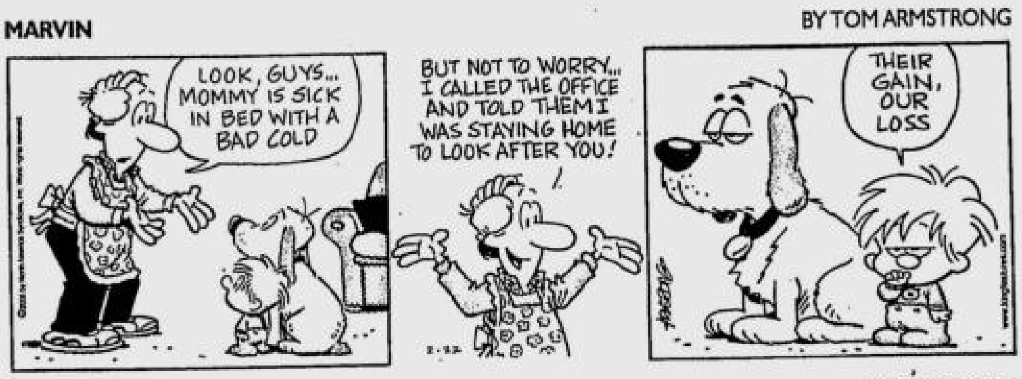
FOXTROT

BY BILL AMEND


JASON, MOM SAYS TO TURN THAT OFF AND COME TO DINNER.
BUT MY ORC SHAMAN IS ALMOST LEVEL 12!
ONCE HE'S LEVEL 12, HE GETS THE ANCESTRAL SPIRIT SPELL, AND HE CAN BRING PLAYERS BACK TO LIFE WHEN THEY DIE!
JASON, NOW!
THAT'LL CERTAINLY COME IN HANDY WHEN MOM KILLS YOU.
TELL HER I'LL BE THERE IN TWO HOURS.
AMEND

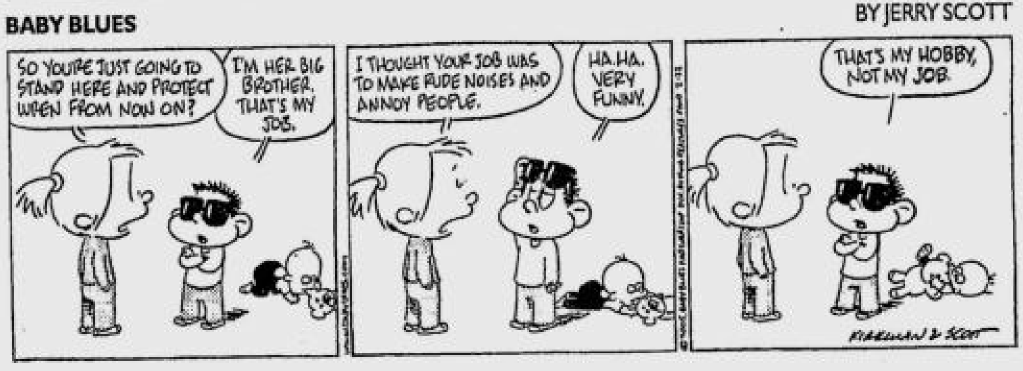
MARVIN

BY TOM ARMSTRONG


LOOK, GUYS... MOMMY IS SICK IN BED WITH A BAD COLD
BUT NOT TO WORRY... I CALLED THE OFFICE AND TOLD THEM I WAS STAYING HOME TO LOOK AFTER YOU!
2-22
THEIR GAIN, OUR LOSS

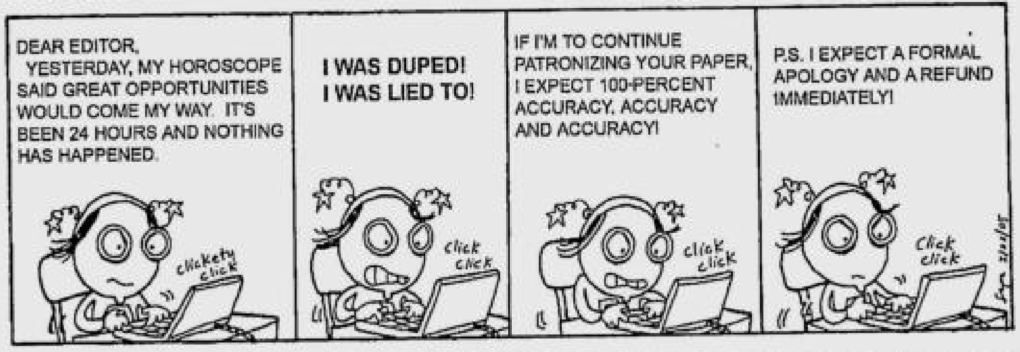
BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


SO YOU'RE JUST GOING TO STAND HERE AND PROTECT WREN FROM NOW ON?
I'M HER BIG BROTHER. THAT'S MY JOB.
I THOUGHT YOUR JOB WAS TO MAKE RUDE NOISES AND ANNOY PEOPLE.
HA.HA. VERY FUNNY.
THAT'S MY HOBBY, NOT MY JOB.
KIRKMAN & SCOTT

ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO


DEAR EDITOR,
YESTERDAY, MY HOROSCOPE SAID GREAT OPPORTUNITIES WOULD COME MY WAY. IT'S BEEN 24 HOURS AND NOTHING HAS HAPPENED.
clickety click
I WAS DUPED! I WAS LIED TO!
click click
IF I'M TO CONTINUE PATRONIZING YOUR PAPER, I EXPECT 100-PERCENT ACCURACY, ACCURACY AND ACCURACY!
click click
P.S. I EXPECT A FORMAL APOLOGY AND A REFUND IMMEDIATELY!
click click

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: You believe in service to others. You seek worthy goals. Because of your ideals, you're often rebellious against the status quo in society. Nevertheless, you have a strong sense of duty. Groups and organizations know they can count on you. This is a year of hard work, building and construction. Accomplish as much as you can.

Birthdate of: Steve Irwin, TV herpetologist; Ted Kennedy, politician; Drew Barrymore, actress.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): You have the ability to discover secrets today or to do some excellent research if you choose. Keep your nose to the proverbial grindstone.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): Conversations with others are energetic and lively today! This is a good day to talk your friends into agreeing with you about anything important. You're extremely convincing!

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): Your ruler, Mercury, is at the top of your chart, making strong aspects to fiery Mars. This makes important people listen to you today. You are empowered!

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): Today is the day to drive home any important deal or to persuade a partner to agree with you. You are unstoppable! You have the ability to explain things very well to others.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): If you need help from others—especially in terms of equipment, materials or increased staff—you will get it! You are blessed with good fortune today. Act now.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): This is an excellent day to teach children something important. Your enthusiasm will carry your words (and nothing is as contagious as enthusiasm)!

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): You're extremely busy today. You're trying to get a lot done—and you will succeed! Grab opportunities as they arise at work. Show others what you can do.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): Your creative vibes are in overdrive today. Tackle anything that is artistic or related to professional sports. Dealings with children are also successful.

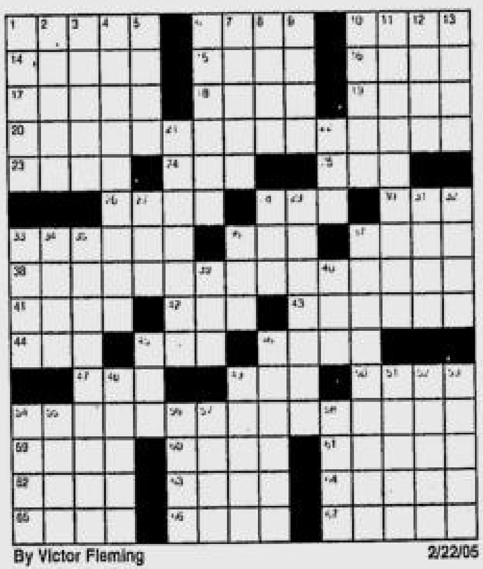
SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): If you have to convince a family member about something today, you can do it. You'll present your ideas with gusto and enthusiasm. Plus, your mind is sharp and quick right now!

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): This is an excellent day for good, hard mental work. Your powers of concentration are keen. (But you want to work on your own ideas.)

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): Others should listen to your moneymaking ideas today, because you're on the ball! You can easily solicit help from the government or large institutions.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): You might get the chance to take over or direct something today. If so, grab it. You will impress everyone with your know-how and your confident attitude! You have leadership skills today!

DAILY CROSSWORD



By Victor Fleming
Little Rock, AR

2/22/05

ACROSS

1 Writer Calvino
6 "Misery" star
10 Minnesota pro
14 Paid heed to
15 Alas!
16 Newspaper section, once
17 Hit by Tom T. Hall
18 Tolstoy and Gorcey
19 Some votes
20 United Nations body
23 Pitcher Hershiser
24 Small boy
25 Hive dweller
26 Drill parts
28 Chore
30 Classic Pontiac letters
33 Sister of Venus
36 Iceberg summit
37 Sign up
38 Media meeting
41 Bit of elementary Latin
42 Pillbox or porkpie
43 Bare minimum
44 Like one Hatter
45 Encountered
46 Carrier plane feature: init.
47 Ming of the NBA
49 __ Paulo
50 Edible tubers
54 Post-election gathering
59 Lab medium
60 Toppled Iranian leader
61 Now in Nogales
62 New Jersey or California city
63 Actress Naldi
64 Hue
65 "The Night of the Hunter" screenwriter
66 __-deucy
67 Paris river

DOWN

1 Architect Jones
2 Chan portrayer
3 Make amends
4 Utmost effort
5 Polish border river
6 Soprano Maria
7 Leading
8 Book after Joel
9 Stack TV role
10 Make my day!
11 Grief-stricken
12 Slanted type: abbr.
13 Too inquisitive
21 Traveling case
22 Recede
27 Election victors
28 Peter Pan rival
29 Sandal-like
31 Twitches
32 Small bills
33 Canned pork product
34 Funny Bombeck
35 Preconceived
36 Big bang letters?
37 Transparent footwear
39 Feedbag tidbit
40 Outback hopper
45 Up-to-date, for short
46 Strut nonchalantly
48 Eagle's abode
49 Emulate Nancy Kerrigan
51 Garlic sauce
52 Airhead
53 Trap
54 Tra follower
55 Excited
56 Annapolis inst.
57 Fashionable
58 Anatomical pouches

Monday's Puzzle Solved

P	A	R	K	A	■	A	S	I	A	■	S	C	A	T
S	T	E	E	P	■	W	E	N	T	■	E	R	L	E
A	L	F	R	E	■	F	A	C	E	■	T	O	O	T
L	A	U	R	A	B	U	S	H	■	H	I	C	E	S
M	S	G	■	■	E	L	I	■	S	I	N	K	■	■
S	T	E	E	D	S	■	C	A	M	S	■	E	B	B
■	■	■	L	I	T	■	K	R	A	K	A	T	O	A
H	I	L	L	A	R	Y	■	C	L	I	N	T	O	N
I	C	E	S	H	E	E	T	■	L	E	N	■	■	■
S	H	A	■	A	W	A	Y	■	E	R	A	S	E	R
■	■	P	I	N	S	■	P	A	S	■	■	T	A	U
F	L	Y	N	N	■	B	E	T	T	Y	F	O	R	D
L	I	E	D	■	H	O	B	O	■	A	L	O	N	E
O	M	A	R	■	E	L	A	N	■	L	U	G	E	S
P	E	R	I	■	M	E	R	E	■	E	B	E	R	T

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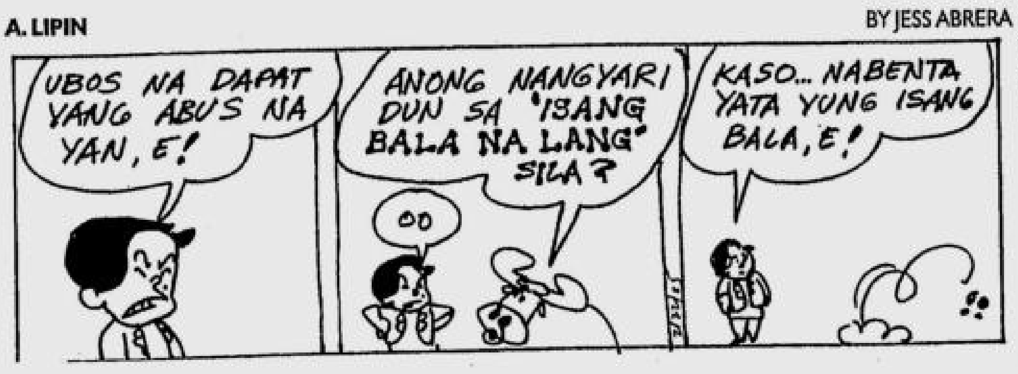
2/22/05

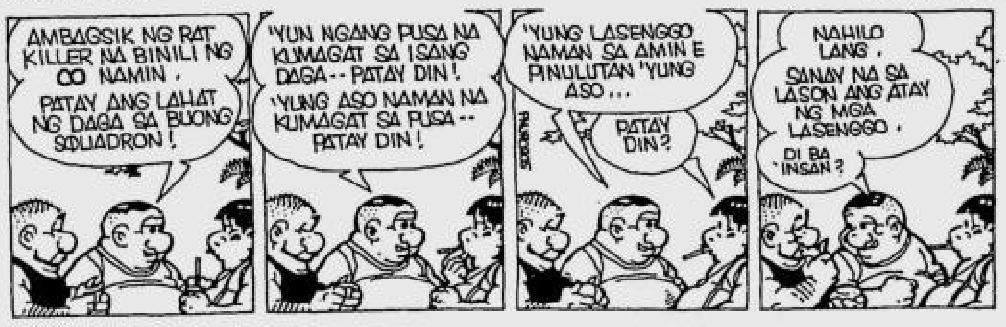
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


UBOS NA DAPAT YANG ABU'S NA YAN, E!
ANONG NANGYARI DUN SA "ISANG BALA NA LANG" SILA?
OO
KASO... NABENTA YATA YUNG ISANG BALA, E!

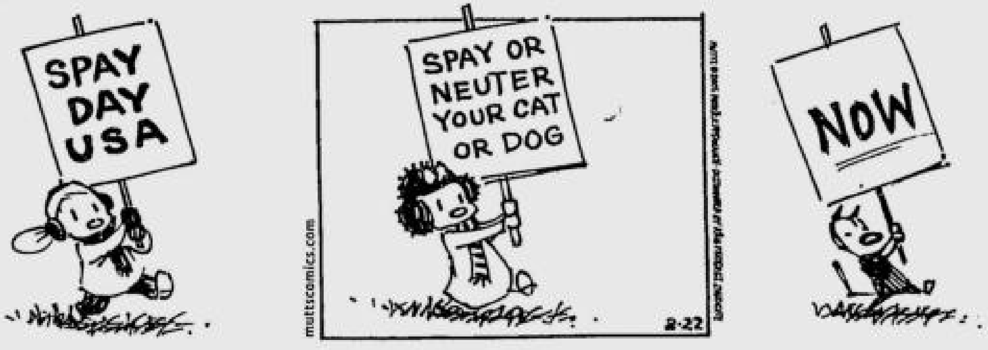
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR


AMBAGSIK NG RAT KILLER NA BINILI NG OO NAMIN.
PATAY ANG LAHAT NG DAGA SA BUONG SQUADRON!
'YUN NGANG PUSA NA KUMAGAT SA ISANG DAGA-- PATAY DIN!
'YUNG ASO NAMAN NA KUMAGAT SA PUSA-- PATAY DIN!
'YUNG LASENGGO NAMAN SA AMIN E PINULUTAN 'YUNG ASO...
PATAY DIN?
NAHILO LANG.
SANAY NA SA LASON ANG ATAY NG MGA LASENGGO.
DI BA 'INSAN?

MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL


SPAY DAY USA
SPAY OR NEUTER YOUR CAT OR DOG
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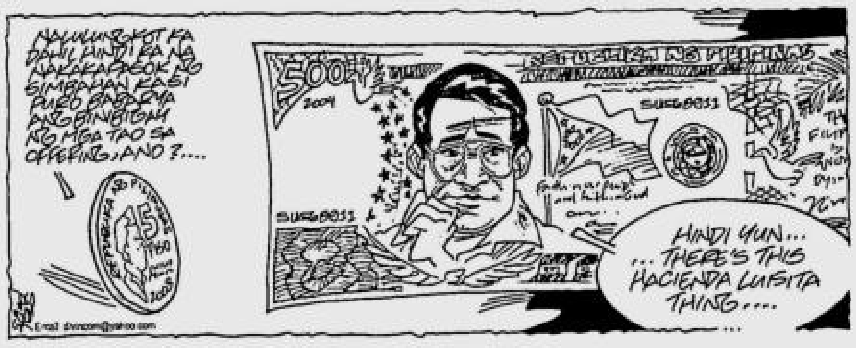
DIVINE COMEDY

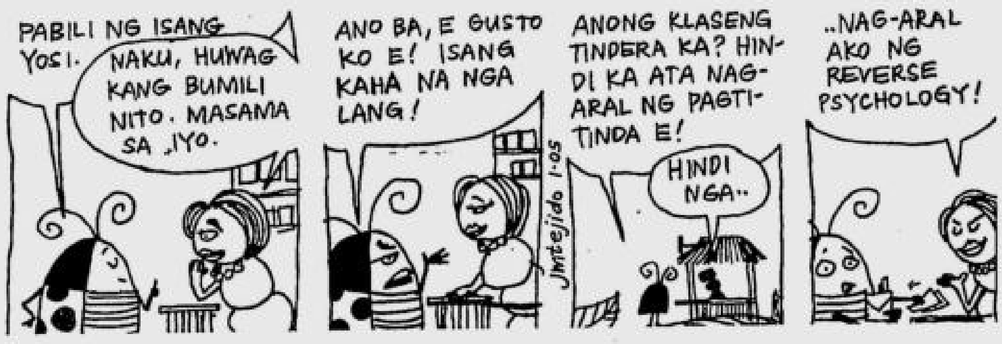
BY STEVEN PABALINAS

**NOTE:
HINDI PO
ITO YUNG
COMICS
STRIP NA
"TULDOK",
"DIVINE
COMEDY"
PO ITO.**


NALULUNGKOT KA DAHIL HINDI KA NA NAKAKAPASOK NG SIMBAHAN KASI PURO BARYA ANG BINIBIGAY NG MGA TAO SA OFFERING, ANO?...
REPUBLIKA NG PILIPINAS
500
2004
HINDI YUN... ...THERE'S THIS HACIENDA LUISITA THING....
E-mail: divincom@yahoo.com

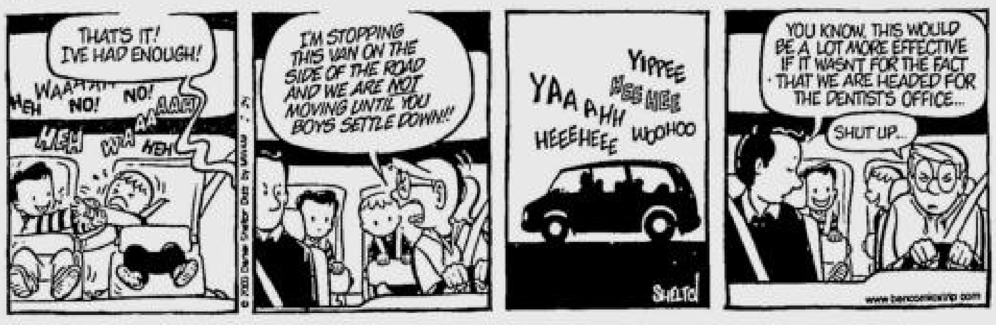
MIKROKOSMOS

BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


PABILI NG ISANG YOSI.
NAKU, HUWAG KANG BUMILI NITO. MASAMA SA IYO.
ANO BA, E GUSTO KO E! ISANG KAHA NA NGA LANG!
Jmtejido 1-05
ANONG KLASENG TINDERA KA? HINDI KA ATA NAG-ARAL NG PAGTITINDA E!
HINDI NGA..
..NAG-ARAL AKO NG REVERSE PSYCHOLOGY!

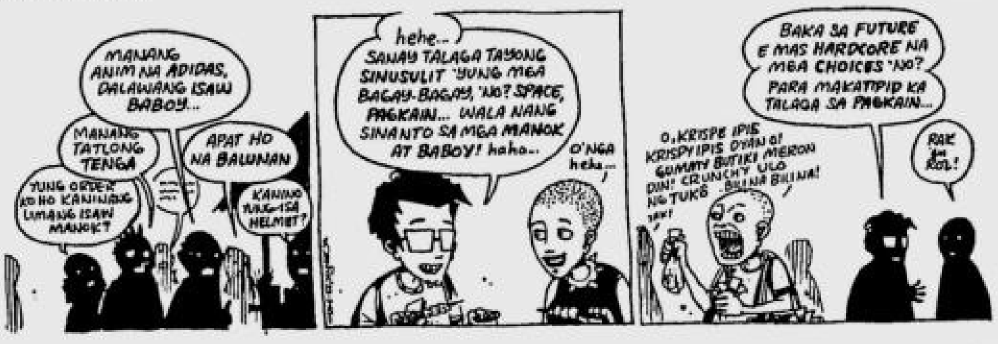
BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON


THAT'S IT! I'VE HAD ENOUGH!
WAAAHH NO! NO! HEH AAAH HEH WAAA HEH
I'M STOPPING THIS VAN ON THE SIDE OF THE ROAD AND WE ARE NOT MOVING UNTIL YOU BOYS SETTLE DOWN!!
YAAAHH YIPPEE HEE HEE HEEEHEEE WOOHOO
SHELTON
YOU KNOW, THIS WOULD BE A LOT MORE EFFECTIVE IF IT WASN'T FOR THE FACT THAT WE ARE HEADED FOR THE DENTIST'S OFFICE...
SHUT UP...
www.bencomicstrip.com

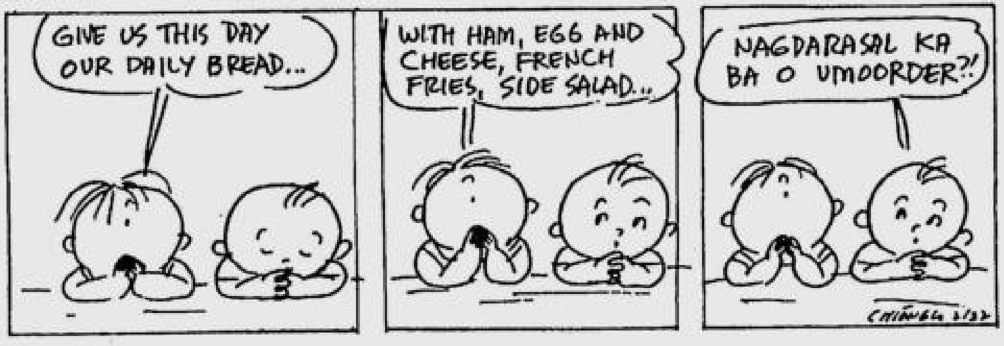
KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA


MANANG ANIM NA ADIDAS, DALAWANG ISAW BABOY...
MANANG TATLONG TENGA
APAT HO NA BALUNAN
YUNG ORDER KO HO KANINANG LIMANG ISAW MANOK?
KANINO YUNG ISA HELMET?
hehe..
SANAY TALAGA TAYONG SINUSULIT 'YUNG MGA BAGAY-BAGAY, 'NO? SPACE, PAGKAIN... WALA NANG SINANTO SA MGA MANOK AT BABOY! haha..
O'NGA hehe..
BAKA SA FUTURE E MAS HARDCORE NA MGA CHOICES 'NO? PARA MAKATIPID KA TALAGA SA PAGKAIN...
O, KRISPE IPIS KRISPY IPIS DYAN O! GUMATY BUTIKI MERON DIN! CRUNCHY ULO NG TUKO BILINA BILINA! YAY!
RAK EN ROL!

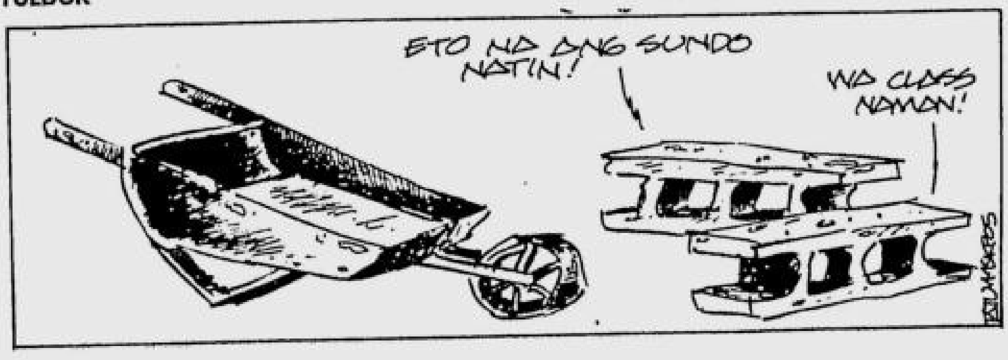
LOVEKNOTS

BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD...
WITH HAM, EGG AND CHEESE, FRENCH FRIES, SIDE SALAD...
NAGDARASAL KA BA O UMOORDER?!
CHIONGLO 2/22

TULDOK

BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


ETO NA ANG SUNDO NATIN!
WA CLASS NAMAN!

2 critics slug it out over Oscar picks

"BABY" changes "every molecule in your body," Lemire says.

(Conclusion)

NEW YORK—Associated Press movie writers David Germain and Christy Lemire duke it out over several main categories in this year's Oscar race, a tougher call, critics agree, than last year's, "when hobbits were expected to rule—and did." Yesterday, Germain and Lemire traded barbs over the Best Picture, Best Director, and Best Actor nominees.

BEST ACTRESS Nominees: Annette Bening, "Being Julia"; Catalina Sandino Moreno, "Maria Full of Grace"; Imelda Staunton, "Vera Drake"; Hilary Swank, "Million Dollar Baby"; Kate Winslet, "Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind."

BLANCHETT is a shoo-in.

LEMIRE: This one's easy, too. In the rematch between Swank and Bening, which Swank won five years ago with her startling performance in "Boys Don't Cry," Swank wins again. As a feisty female boxer, her character has higher highs and lower lows; it's a more complex role. Bening is glorious to watch as an aging London stage diva, and it's the kind of showy role Oscar voters love, but without her there's not much more to say about "Being Julia." Winslet is delightful and Staunton is gracefully understated and Moreno ... well, it's her first film, and look at the splash she's made. She'll have a long career ahead of her.

GERMAIN: Christy's been stealing my thoughts again. Swank clearly has the edge with a role far suppler even than that of "Boys Don't Cry." The only thing that could spoil her prospects is that some academy voters may hesitate over handing a second Oscar to an actress who doesn't have much of a body of work beyond "Boys" and "Baby" (a nice supporting turn in "Insomnia" is her only other film role that really stands out). I'll stick with Swank, but the aging-actress theme may resonate on Bening's behalf; who knows when and if her colleagues will have another chance to give her an Oscar?

BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR Nominees: Alan Alda, "The Aviator"; Thomas Haden Church, "Sideways"; Jamie Foxx, "Collateral"; Morgan Freeman, "Million Dollar Baby"; Clive Owen, "Closer."

GERMAIN: Morgan Freeman has managed to make bad movies watchable with his mix of quiet grace, world-weary wisdom and impish humor. He radiates all those ingredients and more in "Million Dollar Baby," deftly switching from sage-like sidekick to tragic figure to all-seeing narrator. His peers have been looking for a reason to hand him an Oscar; this is it. The nomination alone was a sweet late-career nod for Alda. Church and Owen were excellent but haven't a prayer against Freeman. And Foxx will get his for "Ray."

LEMIRE: I love it, we get to disagree again! I literally sat awake at 6 a.m. thinking about this category and I've come up with Clive Owen. Here's why: Freeman is lovely and graceful in a way we've come to rely on throughout his lengthy career. He is a rock in "Million Dollar Baby." And because of that, it might be easy for voters to take his performance for granted and overlook him. Owen, showing unexpected range, has the most complicated role in a complicated movie. He's the most innocent of the devious dating foursome, and yet he also causes some of the worst damage. It's a huge surprise, and an unforgettable one.

BEST SUPPORTING ACTRESS Nominees: Cate Blanchett, "The Aviator"; Laura Linney, "Kinsey"; Virginia Madsen, "Sideways"; Sophie Okonedo, "Hotel Rwanda"; Natalie Portman, "Closer."

LEMIRE: Madsen provides the earthy, quiet soul of "Sideways." I'd love to see her win it—and considering that she's a former B-movie actress, this is the kind of comeback that Hollywood loves. But Blanchett completely embodies the big, showy, potentially daunting role of Katharine Hepburn in "The Aviator." It's not a dead-on impression, and it shouldn't be, but it captures Hepburn's spirit and will appeal to the old-Hollywood ranks among the Oscar voters. Linney is versatile and makes everything look easy, but there's not much love out there for "Kinsey" (she's the film's sole nominee). Okonedo and Portman offer more than solid supporting work, but as they say, it's an honor just to be nominated.

GERMAIN: Since we wholeheartedly agree on Blanchett, I have room for a smug retort on supporting actor. Clive Owen over Morgan Freeman? To quote Frasier Crane from "Cheers," what color is the sky in your world? But you are sane enough to side with Blanchett, who has the difficult task of playing a woman whose idiosyncrasies practically made Hepburn a caricature of herself. Yet Blanchett manages to resurrect the soul of Hepburn without a trace of caricature. As for Madsen, in any other year, her wine-as-metaphor-for-life speech alone might have earned her the Oscar.

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RAY
MTRCB RATING PG 13

5 CHILDREN AND IT
MTRCB RATING: GP

SALSA
MTRCB Rating: PG13

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10:05 LFS / 10:35 LMF / 12:35 END

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2 FLIGHT OF THE PHOENIX
3 CONSTANTINE
4 PHANTOM OF THE OPERA
5 FEBRUARY LOVE FEST
6 RAY
7 5 CHILDREN AND IT
8 DREAMBOY
9 LET THE LOVE BEGIN
10 CONSTANTINE
11 ASSAULT ON PRECINCT 13
12 MEET THE FOCKERS

sm city fairview
1 ASSAULT ON PRECINCT 13
2 ELEKTRA
3 MEET THE FOCKERS
4 FLIGHT OF THE PHOENIX
5 SHALL WE DANCE
6 FEBRUARY LOVE FEST
7 CONSTANTINE
8 LET THE LOVE BEGIN
9 DREAMBOY
10 CONSTANTINE
11 PHANTOM OF THE OPERA
12 LET THE LOVE BEGIN

sm city north edsa
1 FLIGHT OF THE PHOENIX
2 ELEKTRA
3 LET THE LOVE BEGIN
4 MEET THE FOCKERS
5 FEBRUARY LOVE FEST
6 DREAMBOY
7 CONSTANTINE
8 PHANTOM OF THE OPERA

sm city manila
1 LET THE LOVE BEGIN
2 FLIGHT OF THE PHOENIX
3 FEBRUARY LOVE FEST
4 CONSTANTINE
5 A VERY LONG ENGAGEMENT
6 CONSTANTINE
7 SHALL WE DANCE
8 PHANTOM OF THE OPERA
9 LET THE LOVE BEGIN
10 MEET THE FOCKERS
11 DREAMBOY
12 CONSTANTINE

sm city sta. mesa
1 PETA PLAY
2 LET THE LOVE BEGIN
3 CONSTANTINE
4 DREAMBOY
5 CONSTANTINE
6 SHALL WE DANCE
7 FLIGHT OF THE PHOENIX
8 5 CHILDREN AND IT
9 PHANTOM OF THE OPERA
10 ELEKTRA

sm city southmall
1 FEBRUARY LOVE FEST
2 PHANTOM OF THE OPERA
3 CONSTANTINE
4 LET THE LOVE BEGIN
5 MEET THE FOCKERS
6 DREAMBOY
7 LET THE LOVE BEGIN
8 FLIGHT OF THE PHOENIX
9 ELEKTRA
10 5 CHILDREN AND IT

sm city bicutan
1 CONSTANTINE
2 LET THE LOVE BEGIN
3 DREAMBOY
4 FLIGHT OF THE PHOENIX

sm cinema tutuban
1 RESERVED
2 RESERVED
3 RESERVED
4 RESERVED

sm supercenter sucat
1 ELEKTRA
2 CONSTANTINE
3 LET THE LOVE BEGIN
4 DREAMBOY

LUZON

sm city pampanga
1 CONSTANTINE
2 SHALL WE DANCE
3 DREAMBOY
4 LET THE LOVE BEGIN
5 WITHOUT A PADDLE
6 LET THE LOVE BEGIN

sm city baguio
1 SHALL WE DANCE
2 LET THE LOVE BEGIN
3 DREAMBOY
4 CONSTANTINE

sm city batangas
1 CONSTANTINE
2 LET THE LOVE BEGIN
3 DREAMBOY
4 MEET THE FOCKERS

sm city dasmariñas
1 CONSTANTINE
2 LET THE LOVE BEGIN
3 DREAMBOY
4 ASSAULT ON PRECINCT 13

sm city marilao
1 LET THE LOVE BEGIN
2 DREAMBOY
3 SHALL WE DANCE
4 MEET THE FOCKERS

sm city bacoor
1 ASSAULT ON PRECINCT 13
2 ELEKTRA
3 CONSTANTINE
4 DREAMBOY
5 CONSTANTINE
6 LET THE LOVE BEGIN
7 SALSA smcinemaexclusive
8 FLIGHT OF THE PHOENIX

sm city lucena
1 SHALL WE DANCE
2 LET THE LOVE BEGIN
3 A VERY LONG ENGAGEMENT
4 DREAMBOY

VISAYAS AND MINDANAO

sm city cebu
1 LIFE & LOVE IN THE TIME OF SORLOLOY (CHOIR CONCERT)
2 CONSTANTINE
3 MEET THE FOCKERS
4 A VERY LONG ENGAGEMENT
5 DREAMBOY
6 WITHOUT A PADDLE
7 LET THE LOVE BEGIN
8 CONSTANTINE

sm city iloilo
1 DREAMBOY
2 RESERVED
3 SALSA smcinemaexclusive
4 LET THE LOVE BEGIN
5 CONSTANTINE
6 SHALL WE DANCE
7 RESERVED
8 MEET THE FOCKERS

sm city davao
1 CONSTANTINE
2 SHALL WE DANCE
3 LET THE LOVE BEGIN
4 MEET THE FOCKERS
5 DREAMBOY
6 CONSTANTINE

sm city cagayan de oro
1 CONSTANTINE
2 DREAMBOY
3 LET THE LOVE BEGIN
4 SHALL WE DANCE

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HITCH
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4:00 PM Sailormoon (Japanese TOEI Animation)
5:30 PM Spongebob Squarepants (Nickelodeon Animation)
7:00 PM Annecy Shorts Film (French Animation)
9:00 PM Corto Maltese (French Animation)

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HITCH PG13 12:15, 2:45, 5:15, 7:45, 10:15
CONSTANTINE PG13 11:50,2:30,5:10,7:50,10:30
PHANTOM OF THE OPERA PG13 1:30,4:20,7:10,10:00
RAY PG13 1:15,4:15,7:15,10:20
SHALL WE DANCE GP 1:00,3:15

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2 CONSTANTINE 10:55, 1:45, 4:35 7:25, 10:30 PG-13
3 HITCH (SNEAK PREVIEW) 11:50, 2:30, 5:10, 7:50, 10:30 PG-13
4 SIDEWAYS 11:30, 2:20, 5:10 8:00, 10:40 R-13

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2 Saranggani
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③ PHANTOM OF THE OPERA MTRCB PG-13 12:20, 3:15, LMF
② SIDEWAYS MTRCB R-18 11:45, 2:20, 4:55, 7:30, 10:05 LMF
④ CONSTANTINE MTRCB PG-13 12:30, 3:20, LMF
PREMIERE THEATRE "RAY" (Story of Ray Charles)
MTRCB PG-13 12:30, 3:35, 6:40, 9:45 LMF
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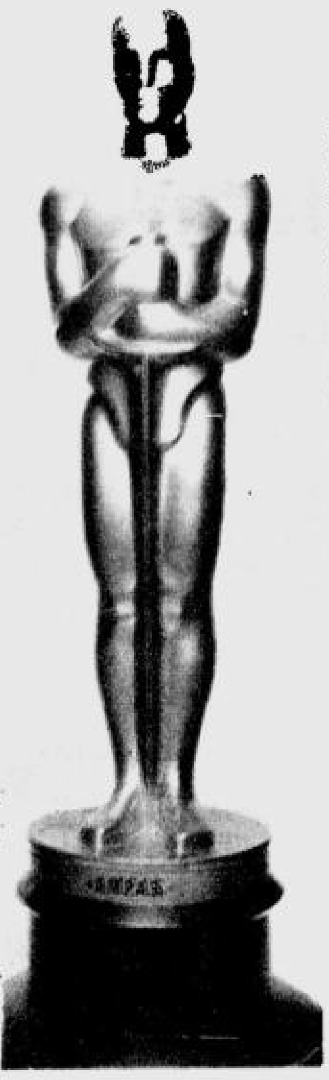
All about that coveted statuette



VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

IN less than one week, the Academy Awards for outstanding achievement in Film Year 2004 will be handed out. Excitement over those film honors is peaking, so it's time to give their signature golden statuette, Oscar, its due:

Let's lead off with a recent revelation: A study has shown that Oscar winners live four years longer than "mere" nominees! That provides yet another reason for doing your darndest to win that trophy!

How do we account for that surprising "longevity" statistic? Maybe the surge of joy you get when you win such a big-deal award gives your immune system a major boost?

Who knows? The point is, statistically, Oscar winners live longer—and when you hit your 70s, those extra four years could sure come in handy!

Other Oscar lore: Younger film buffs may not know it, but the Academy Awards' statuette was named Oscar after a secretary named **Margaret Herrick** (later executive director of the Academy) exclaimed that its behind reminded her of the posterior of her Uncle Oscar (Pierce). Is this a bit of Hollywood apocryphal? Not as far as Ms Herrick and her uncle's butt are concerned!

A more relevant question: How reliable are the Academy Awards' verdicts? Through the years, some deserving winners have gone home empty-handed, others have had their awards mysteriously "deferred," still others have won for "emotional" reasons, and there have been winners who were shocked that they had won, because they felt they didn't turn in the best work in their category that year.

A case in point is **Elizabeth Taylor**, who should have won the best Actress Oscar 1959 for "Suddenly Last Summer," but didn't. Then she became desperately ill, and was even at death's door, so she won the Oscar in 1960 for "Butterfield 8," despite the fact that her performance in that film wasn't one of her best—A case of *"pasang-awa,"* Hollywood style!

What about those acceptance speeches—are they best when memorized, or should they be spontaneous? Well, if you're **Laurence Olivier**, who can conjure up the most beautiful words and insights that hit listeners where they live and breathe, by all means, prepare your acceptance speech. But, if you're less eloquent and wise, your memorized speech could sound—memorized. So, don't!

Yul Brynner weighs in on the issue: "Never prepare an acceptance speech until you have your hands firmly on the Oscar—otherwise, it will continue to haunt you in the years to come as an unfulfilled dream!"

More facts: The Academy Awards have been given annually since 1927 to film artists and technicians by the US Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences in the form of 13 1/2-inch-high gold-plated statuettes.

Members of different movie art and craft branches select up to five nominees for awards in their particular specialty (actors select actors, etc.). The entire Academy membership of more 5,000 members then votes in a secret ballot on the final winners in all categories.

The Oscar statuette itself was designed by art director **Cedric Gibbons** and executed by sculptor **George Stanley**. The figure of a man holding a sword and standing on a reel of film is made of steel and plated with gold.

'Pelikula at Lipunan'

YOUNG cineastes keep complaining that they can't get to see Filipino film classics these days. We advise them to patiently scour our local movie channels, and to watch out for festivals and retrospective screenings.

Fot instance, the "Pelikula at Lipunan" film festival will screen National Artist Eddie Romero's "Aguila" as a tribute to its star, **Fernando Poe Jr.**, at 5 p.m. tomorrow at SM Megamall Cinema 6.

The Pelikula at Lipunan filmfest will run at SM Megamall from Feb. 23 to 27.

Soundtrack album

THE SOUNDTRACK album of the blockbuster film, "Let the Love Begin," has been certified gold. The theme song is performed by Kyla and **Jerome John Hughes**. Other attractions are "Ms. Serious" and "Alipin," both performed by the Shamrock band.

Three bonus tracks are included: the title song's minus-one, its instrumental version, and a music video. The album is also available on cassettes.

SAG bats for stunt awards

LOS ANGELES—An Academy Award category honoring the crucial work of stunt coordinators should be added, the Screen Actors Guild said Friday.

"Through incredible skill and daring, stunt coordinators provide critical safety and artistic contributions that must be acknowledged," said SAG President Melissa Gilbert. "Not only do they keep actors safe, they maintain the safety of every single person in the proximity of every stunt that is performed."

Long shot

All requests for new categories are reviewed by the board of governors of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences but are rarely successful, said academy spokesman John Pavlik.

The last new categories added were animated feature films in 2001—and makeup in 1981.

"The subject of an award for stunt people has come up several times in the past decade and a half and has been rejected by the board each time," Pavlik said.

Gilbert called the honor overdue and said SAG officials would work with the stunt community to continue lobbying the academy.

The next meeting of the board of governors is in May. *AP*

RETURN Sarah Jessica Parker is taking a lead role in the romantic movie "Love Walked In," industry publication Variety reported Friday. This is her first movie role since "Sex and City." AFP

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SIDEWAYS
12:45 / 3:30 / 6:15 / 9:00
RAY - LIFE STORY OF RAY CHARLES
12:30 / 3:20 / 6:10 / 9:00
VERY LONG ENGAGEMENT
1:30 / 4:10
MEET THE FOCKERS
12:00 / 2:15 / 4:30 / 6:45 / 9:00
LET THE LOVE BEGIN
12:10 / 2:30 / 4:50 / 7:10 / 9:30
DREAM BOY
12:10 / 2:30 / 4:50 / 7:10 / 9:30
PHANTOM OF THE OPERA
1:00 / 3:50 / 6:40 / 9:30
SHALL WE DANCE
12:30 / 2:45 / 5:00 / 7:15 / 9:30
DOLBY DIGITAL-EX

ALI MALL CINEMAS
❶ LET THE LOVE BEGIN
11:00 / 1:20 / 3:40 / 6:00 / 8:20
❷ CONSTANTINE
11:00 / 1:15 / 3:45 / 6:15 / 8:45
❸ PHANTOM OF THE OPERA
11:50 / 2:40 / 5:30 / 8:20
❹ FLIGHT OF THE PHOENIX
12:05 / 2:10 / 4:15 / 6:20 / 8:25
❺ DREAM BOY
11:00 / 1:20 / 3:40 / 6:00 / 8:20
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ARANETA COLISEUM — Fire Dance Spectacular February 22 to 27; Jars of Clay: Show You Love March 2
GATEWAY MALL — performance by Mishka Adams at The Gazebo February 25
COLISEUM CIRCLE — Cool Jazz, Cool Classics every Fridays & Saturdays
SHOPWISE STRIP — Acoustic Performances at Gloria Jeans February 23 & 26

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How do we love our children?

By Raymond Lee

REVIEW

HOW DO do you find the words to write about a film whose immediate effect is to render you speechless?

I saw director Ditsi Carolino's film twice—first when she showed her almost-final cut, sans music, to us her classmates in a UP film writing workshop last October; second at the full-house premiere at the Cine Adarna (formerly UP Film Center) last December.

In both instances the end of "Bunso" was met with silence.

Not silence born out of indifference or polite relief, in deference to the presence of the filmmaker; but stunned silence, and silence as defense mechanism—a finger to a hole in a dam. When the dam burst, well, it was visible on the faces of those who had just seen ... a miracle.

"*Nawasak ako*," I overheard someone say after the premiere. She described for the rest of us our own unarticulated feelings. How do you translate this? "I was devastated?" "Blown away?" "Flattened?" "Demolished?" "Gutted?"

All of the above, utterly and completely.

DITSI CAROLINO and Nana Buxani, the duo behind the docu

Carolino filmed Bunso (The Youngest) in a jail in Cebu where the child offenders were mixed with the adult prisoners. Cheek by jowl they slept in cramped, unsanitary quarters that leaked when it rained and reeked any other day. Pushing and shoving, they lined up for their daily gruel.

She filmed dozens of these children—all of them poor, most from dysfunctional families—for several weeks. She zeroed in on three of them. They were 12, 13 years old at the time the film was shot, but none of them looked over 10. They were, despite their age, The Three Wise Men of this film. It seems life had exempted them from boyhood.

BUNSO
The Youngest

The Charmer

Tony is the charmer, the natural leader among them. He addresses the camera like a long-lost friend and makes as if he were touring us in his own private castle. He provides the articulate running commentary that practically glues the film's narrative together. He becomes our eyes and ears into this world that has so been misrepresented in many of our prison genre movies that are more juvenile and more delinquent than any of the juvenile delinquents here.

Same goes for these children's parents. In one of the outstanding scenes, we meet Tony's mother and father. The interaction starts with his already drunk mother opening another bottle of beer. The camera pulls out just enough to reveal she is pregnant. And it is early in the day. She laments her son's plight. She blames her husband for putting him in jail. Her husband, slick and glib, reasons that it's for his son's own good. So that gave him the right to beat the living hell out of their son? the woman demands. This escalates into a full-blown verbal war that any screenwriter (this one included) can only dream of putting down on paper. The mother reveals that the father threatened to kill the son and promised to get away with it. Finally the father retreats in embarrassed but remorseless silence.

So in the cellblock, Tony becomes sort of a mother hen to the other boys after their own mothers and fathers had likewise broken their bodies and spirits. He takes under his wing Itsoy (a play on *tisoy* as he is fair-skinned and handsome), the youngest and the most feisty of them, who takes on his delinquent mother in one of cinema's most unforgettable confrontation scenes bar none, documentary or feature. In Cebuano he tells her, "You call yourselves parents?! You beat me up, you should be in jail, not me." And he's right.

Tony finds a shirt to give a shivering Diosel, the third of this magical triumvirate. He is the angel among them, with an angelic singing voice and a knack for telling a damn funny story even if it is about him getting caught stealing change from a store so he can eat, the store owner showing him compassion and forgiving him, and him getting no such luck from his own father who sends him to jail just to teach him a lesson.

Prescribed audience

Carolino is our most acclaimed documentarist. Her films, most notably "Minsan Lang Sila Bata (Children Only Once)" and "Riles (Life On the Tracks)," have screened to international praise. They are a scathing record of poverty amid culpable social structures, but also immensely intimate portraits of the indomitable human soul still standing after it has been slapped, kicked, spat on. "Bunso" is no different. Only, it is better.

It blurs the lines between journalism and literature, advocacy and artistry. It deserves to be seen by film students and the whole Filipino movie industry. Mother Lily, the Del Rosarios, the Lopezes, et al. should organize a conference on renewing our cinema—something they should have done years ago—and begin by watching this film. All congressmen, senators, and government employees starting with the President must see this film. A front row seat should be reserved for Her Excellency. The Department of Education should make this required viewing in all our schools public and private.

It is said that it is in our culture, our nature to love children to the point of spoiling them rotten. Carolino's film quietly asks where that love has gone. Or, are we loving them to death, literally?

(Bunso will be screened in the Pelikula at Lipunan film festival at the 700-seater Cinema 6 of SM Megamall at 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, February 24.)

A happy reunion of friends

DOLLY WOOD

Dolly Ann Carvajal

EVEN IF Sen. **Jinggoy Estrada**'s birthday bash at "Toys for the Big Boys" was a star-studded affair, there was nothing too show biz or political about it. From the moment I arrived with my French twin **Arabelle**, I sensed the warmth and sincerity in the air. It was a happy reunion of Jinggoy's close friends who have stood by him through all his ups and downs.

The senator's *muy graciosa* wife **Precy** made everybody feel instantly at home. She and Jinggoy were in matching mint green tops. Later in the evening, they both changed into light pink. Their being color-coordinated only goes to show that the couple are really one even in the minutest details. How else could they have weathered all the storms together?

Rico Puno brought the house down with his naughty antics. Long before stand-up comics became a craze, Rico has been at it already. He acknowledged the presence of **Eddie Garcia**, saying "*Di na niya kailangan ng*(He doesn't need) Viagra. Diatabs *lang solved na*!" Then he teased another **Eddie (Gutierrez)**: "*Okay 'tong si* Eddie. *Dalawa ang asawa* (He has two wives). *Si* **Pilita** *at* **Anabelle**!" He singled out almost every celebrity present and made a joke about them ... all in the spirit of fun.

SINGING SENATORS Bong Revilla and Jinggoy Estrada

ARABELLE JIMENEZ

The guests also lapped up **Marissa Sanchez**'s punchlines. She ribbed everybody "*Ang lahat ng magkaaway dito ay pwede magkabati at lahat ng magkabati ay pwede maging magkaaway bago matapos ang gabi* (Tonight, enemies can be friends and friends can be enemies before the party's over)!"

Mended friendships

SPEAKING of mended friendships, it was heartwarming to see Sen. **Bong Revilla** serenade the birthday boy, with whom he had a controversial rift not too long ago. But estranged couple **Ara Mina** and **Jomari Yllana** didn't even glance at each other. Jom left ahead. When it was Ara's turn to sing, she seemed to be at a loss. The heartbroken actress asked the crowd what she should sing. One table playfully snapped back, "Saan Ako Nagkamali?" Ara took it all in stride. There was nary a trace of bitterness on her sweet face.

The whole room roared when Mayor **Vilma Santos** and **Edgar Mortiz** gamely did a duet of their love team song, "Something Stupid." Sen. **Ralph Recto** cheered them on. We were teasing **Tirso Cruz** to join Vi and Bot onstage. He said he needed a **Nora Aunor** look-alike to complete the Guy and Pip/Vi and Bot casting.

Almost everybody sang for Jinggoy. Even Senator Ralph got cajoled into singing. Mayor Vi served as his coach. **Johnny Delgado**, who rarely sings, also did a special number. His wife Direk **Laurice Guillen** proudly watched him do his thing.

Some of the other VIP guests at Jinggoy's fete were Ms **Susan Roces**, **Rudy Fernandez** and **Lorna Tolentino**, **Christopher de Leon** and **Sandy Andolong**, **Amy Austria** and hubby **Duke**, **Philip Salvador** and **Emma**, **Randy** and **Rowell Santiago**, Pops Fenandez, **Ruffa Mae Quinto**, **Vhong Navarro**, **Gary Estrada**, **Jay Manalo**, **Atoy Co**, and **Bayani Agbayani** to name a few.

I enjoyed catching up with my *kumpare* Vice Mayor **Philip Cezar** and *kumare* **April Cezar**. I asked Philip what he would do if he were in the shoes of **Mon Fernandez** (his PBA contemporary) who's being accused as a wife beater. He sighed, "Why should I admit it, if it were not true?" To lighten the mood, I kidded April, "Aren't you gonna do a **Marissa Fernandez**?" Someone at our table said in jest: "But make it appear like Philip is the battered one, *para iba naman ang kwento* (for a change)."

My "sister" **Riki Kwek** came with her fiance **Cris Mathay**. They are set to take the plunge in June. She fondly calls him "the male version of Ara Mina." For sure, the legions of guys who have a big crush on Riki will "mourn" when she gets hitched.

Welcome back, Mark

IT WAS good to see **Mark Anthony Fernandez** back in circulation. He came with his charming wife **Marissa**. He looks so much better now than the first time he came out of rehab. Seems like this time around Mark has really learned his lessons well and is raring to revive his show biz career. If Binoe was able to do it, why can't Mark? **Jean Garcia** was the picture of an "*ulirang* girlfriend" to **Gardo Versoza**. She took care of him like a baby when he had a few too many drinks.

It was such a wonderful night of friendship and laughter. As Senator Jinggoy put it: "*Ayoko nang makiharap sa mga pulitiko. Gusto ko sa totoong tao na taga industriya ng pelikulang Pilipino na tulad ninyo* (I'd rather interact with real people in the industry like you, than deal with politicians)."

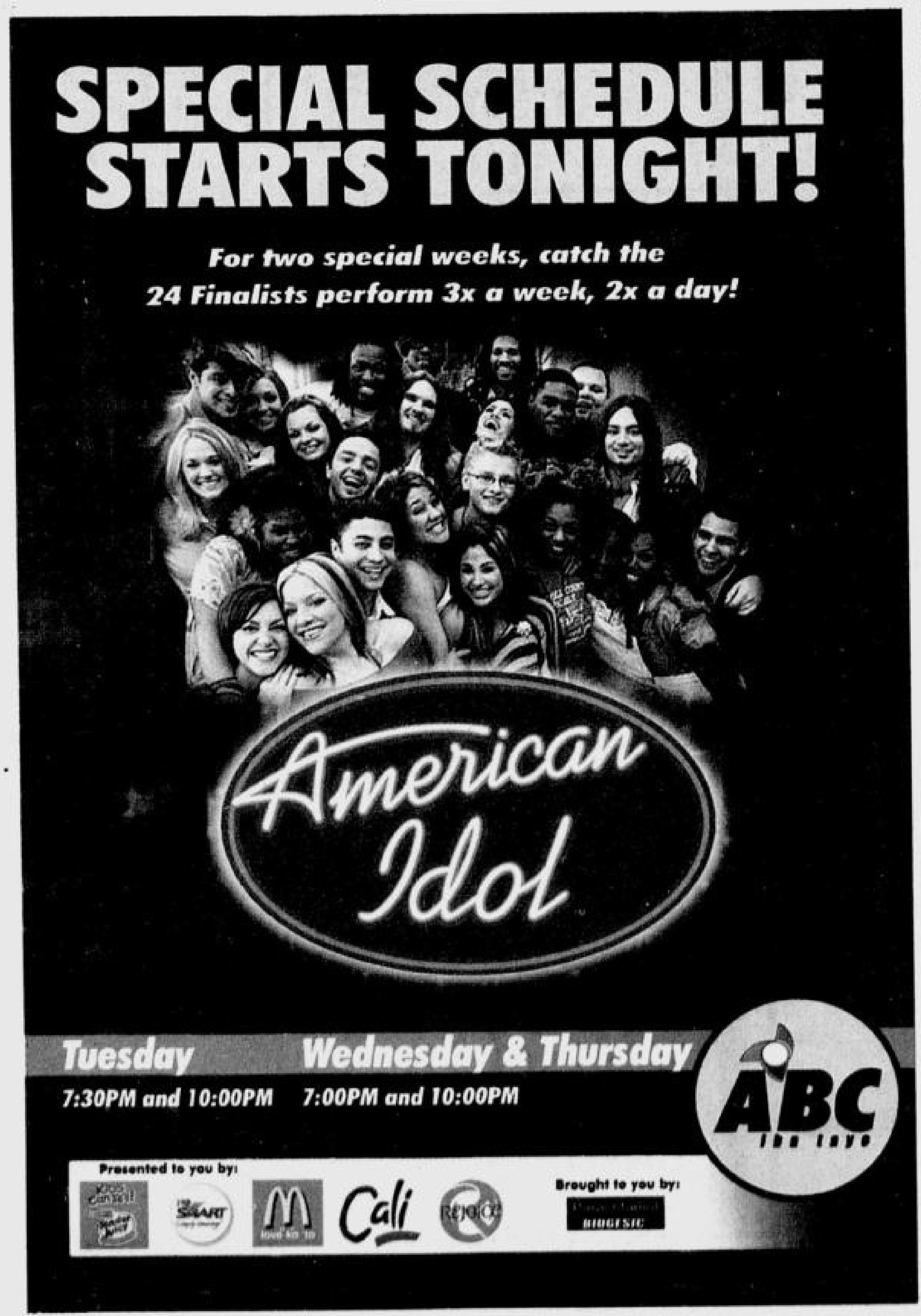
Only a couple as well-loved as Jinggoy and Precy can bring together such a happy solid group. Political differences and show biz feuds were set aside. Friendship prevailed.

Happy happy birthday, *Kumpareng* Jinggoy! I'm sure my mom was with us in spirit during your party. She really loved you like a son. You've always known that in your heart, *'di ba?*

(For feedback, email wateringholeshangri-la@yahoo.com or dollyanne@truefaith-band.com)

VI and Bot today

ARABELLE JIMENEZ



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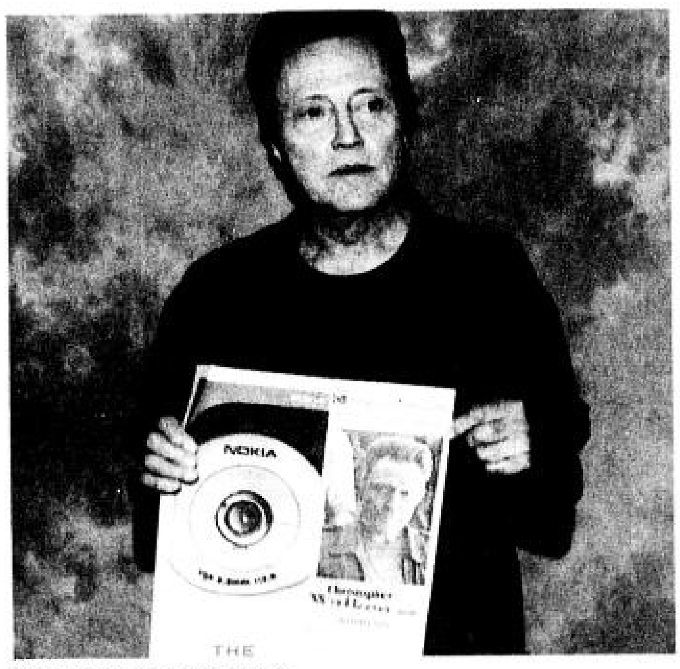
Mourning the passing of Christopher Walken's biggest fan

By Ruben V. Nepales
LA Correspondent

LOS ANGELES—When entertainment editor Louie Camino passed away last Wednesday, actor Christopher Walken lost his biggest fan.

No fan on this earth knew more about "The Great Walken," as Louie himself loved to call the 1978 Oscar Best Supporting Actor (for "The Deer Hunter"). Louie only occasionally e-mailed us but when he did, especially when he was being ecstatic about "The Great Wan" (another title), he wrote inspired notes. They were "crisp, crackling prose," as Nini Valera, in her touching story on the man last Friday, described his text messages to her.

When I e-mailed Louie how I once saw Walken breaking into a dance during a filming break in downtown LA, Louie replied: "That anecdote made me both happy and sad. I wish I'd been there to see him dance that jig. Did you know that the great six-footer used to be, among others, a dancer on and off Broadway? And you didn't happen to have a camera with you when you saw The Great Walken? I hope you [never] get an interview with him, because I will do it myself . . . if I have to hijack a plane to accomplish it." He signed off with his usual "Louie C," but this time added, "Chris Walken's alter ego."



"THE GREATEST ACTOR IN THE WORLD" holds Louie's dream page, autographed.

Knowing how he reveled in any news about Walken, we told him that Ron Perlman ("Hellboy") said in an interview that watching the actor and Irene Worth in a play profoundly inspired Perlman to pursue an acting career. We were floored to hear that Louie even knew about that Walken trivia. "Yes," he e-mailed. "I've read about that '70s performance of the Tennessee Williams play, and even looked for photos of it in a US theater annual. He (Walken) was very young, very blonde and very good."

Biggest request

We kept asking him if he wanted anything from the States. He always replied "Nothing." But one time, our persistence finally paid off. He e-mailed us a list. What a surprise: "Magazines with Christopher Walken articles; Chris Walken videos and DVDs." You get the drift. And last on the list: "Note from Walken, written on his centerfold."

When we sent him a mountain-high stack of Walken articles, thanks to Google, Louie's reaction was unexpected, even though we already knew how much of a Walken fanatic he was. "I almost cried, no kidding," he began. "What almost brought the tears to my eyes was the thick printout on the greatest actor in cinematic history. I'm savoring the material by reading it one by one. Well,

> No fan on the face of the earth knew more about 'The Great Wan' than Louie C. He called himself the actor's 'alter ego'

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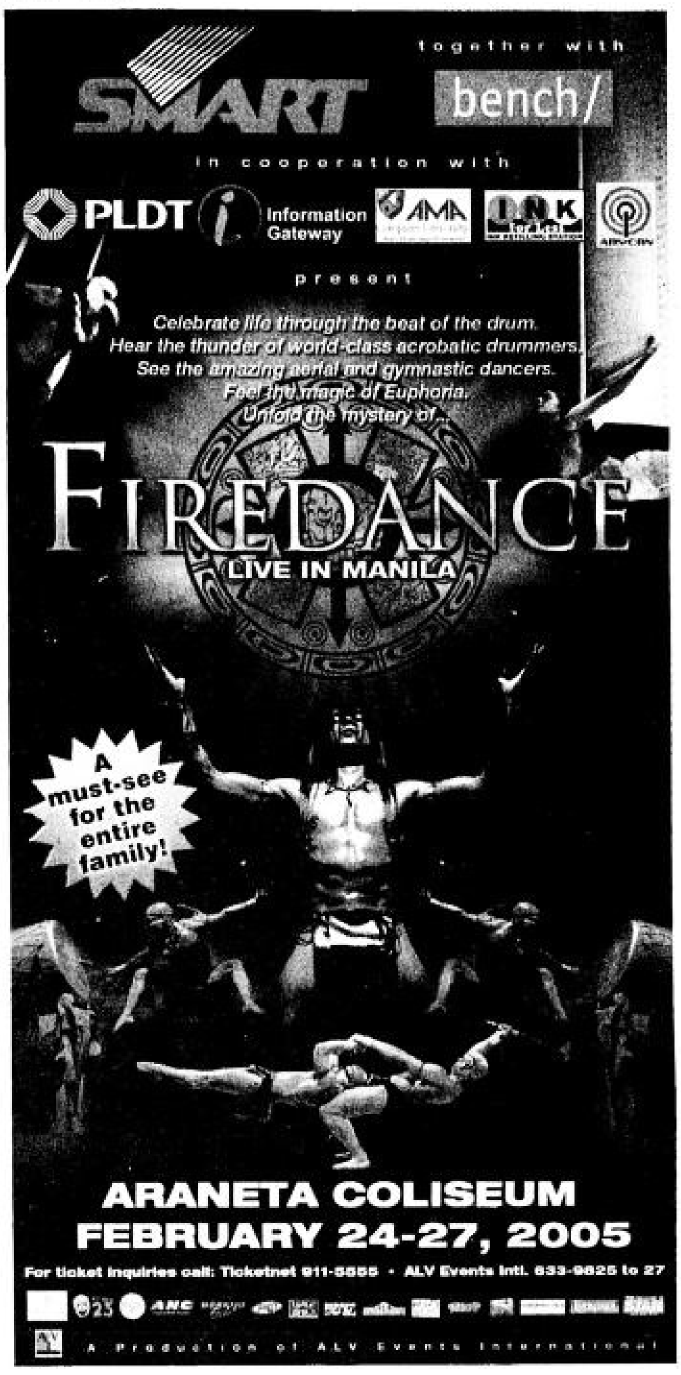
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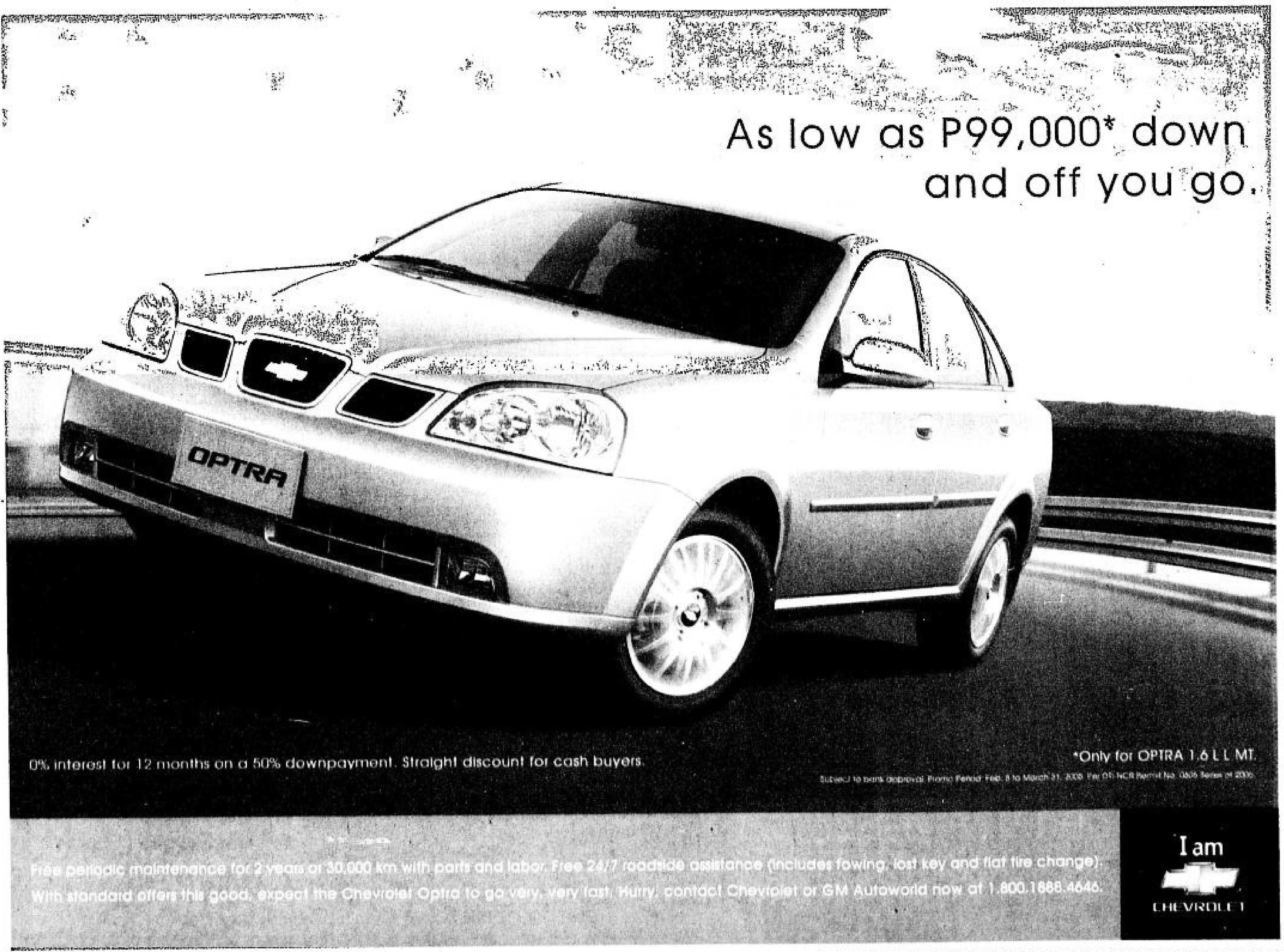

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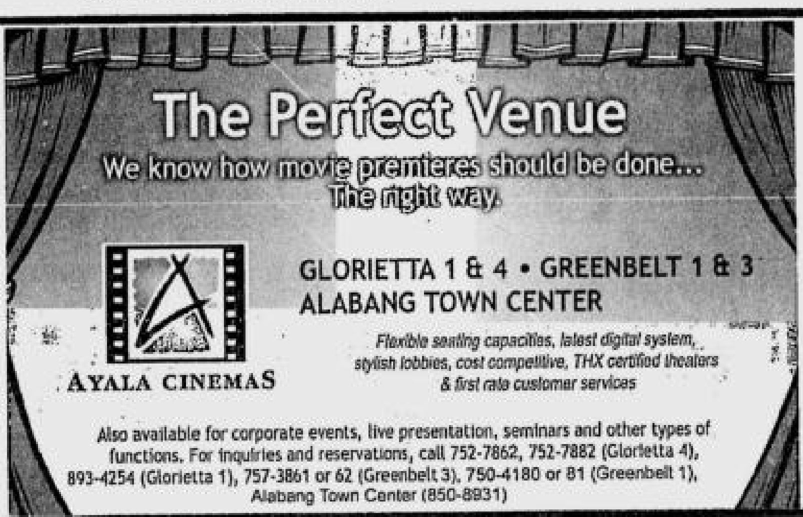

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2 CONSTANTINE
10:50 1:30 4:10 6:50 9:30
3 RAY
11:05 1:55 4:45 7:35 10:00
4 5 CHILDREN AND IT 11:10 1:20 3:30
SHALL WE DANCE 5:30 7:00 9:30
5 LET THE LOVE BEGIN
12:00 2:30 5:00 7:30 10:00
6 SIDEWAYS
11:40 2:15 4:50 7:25 10:00
7 DREAMBOY
12:00 2:30 5:00 7:30 10:00
8 PHANTOM OF THE OPERA
1:15 4:10 7:05 10:00
9 MEET THE FOCKERS
1:05 3:20 5:35 7:50 10:00
10 FLIGHT OF THE PHOENIX
12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00

ERMITA 536-7809 to 12

1 CONSTANTINE 10:20 12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00
2 5 CHILDREN AND IT 10:10 12:05 2:00 3:25
FLIGHT OF THE PHOENIX 5:20 7:40 10:00
3 PHANTOM OF THE OPERA
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4 DREAMBOY
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5 SIDEWAYS 10:35 1:15 3:55
CONSTANTINE 9:20
6 LET THE LOVE BEGIN
10:15 12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 9:50
7 ASSAULT ON PRECINT 13
10:20 12:30 2::50 5:10 7:30 9:50

METRO EAST 682-8193 • 682-8199

1 5 CHILDREN AND IT 10:50 12:50 2:50
ASSAULT ON PRECINT 13 6:40 9:00
2 PHANTOM OF THE OPERA
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3 SIDEWAYS
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4 FLIGHT OF THE PHOENIX
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5 CONSTANTINE
12:05 2:45 5:25 8:05 10:30
6 DREAMBOY
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7 BATH HOUSE
12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00
8 LET THE LOVE BEGIN
12:05 2:45 5:25 8.05 10:30

NOVALICHES 935-3229/31

1 CONSTANTINE
11:50 2:40 5:30 8:25
2 LET THE LOVE BEGIN
11:50 2:10 4:30 6:50 9:00
3 PHANTOM OF THE OPERA
11:20 2:20 5:20 8:25
4 FLIGHT OF THE PHOENIX
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5 DREAMBOY
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6 ALFIE
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7 ELEKTRA
12:30 2:30 4:30 6:30 8:30
8 ASSAULT ON PRECINT 13
1:00 3:00 5:00 7:00 8:55

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1 CONSTANTINE
2 PHANTOM OF THE OPERA
3 FLIGHT OF THE PHOENIX
4 LET THE LOVE BEGIN

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2 DREAMBOY
3 LET THE LOVE BEGIN
4 ELEKTRA

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1 LET THE LOVE BEGIN
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3 FLIGHT OF THE PHOENIX
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SIDEWAYS

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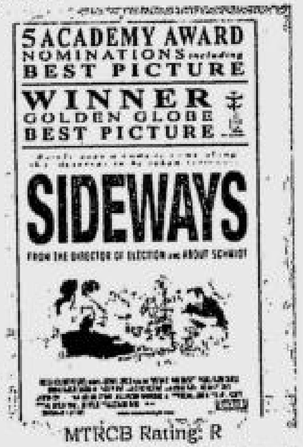
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4 FLIGHT OF THE PHOENIX
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2 LET THE LOVE BEGIN
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5 DREAMBOY
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Mourni

From page A2-1

what else can I say. I'm choking with emotion. But I'm still waiting for the centerfold. Don't think I'm giving up."

Even a, dare we say it now, minor film in Walken's filmography drew this raving, though self-deprecating, comment from him: "I thoroughly enjoyed 'Suicide Kings.' It's already a classic. In my mind."

Giggling ed

In another e-mail, he wrote: "I spent a long night again last night, watching 'Poolhall Junkies' and reading the articles on The Great Chris. I did not finish 'Poolhall.' I want it to last a long time. But from what I've seen of it so far, I love it, despite the earlier bad reviews in the press. Walken is so natural and so good in it, he seems to be enjoying himself. Even the director and the producer themselves on the commentary track said they enjoyed his performance. I had so much fun watching it that I was giggling at many scenes! Of his recent movies, this is one where he looks very good, too, [physically]." (How often does a reporter hear his editor admit giggling through a movie? My wife Janet and I smiled over that one for many days, glad to somehow make Louie happy. By this time, we had heard that he was ill; he did not tell us about his illness for a long time.)

Louie continued: "I liked 'The Guardian' story on Walken cooking throughout the interview, complete with the recipes at the end. He really has a reputation as a cook. I know I will try to do his shrimp appetizer and his linguine.

"I stopped watching 'Poolhall' a few minutes after Walken first entered the story, where he played pool with the lead actor. Then I started watching 'Joe Dirt' but didn't go far enough to see the part where Walken comes in. I'll watch them again tonight. So you can imagine my after-office hours these days. Thrilling, as far as I'm concerned."

To interview the acclaimed character actor so Louie can share the experience vicariously became our mission. We planned on also getting the actor's autograph for Louie if we did land an interview. Our first opportunity came with "The Rundown," where Walken played one of his villains with scenery-chewing charm and accent. Alas, Walken was not participating in the interviews.

The pursuit

Undeterred, we covered the premiere, on the slim chance that Louie's guy would show up. We stayed until the last starlet staggered on the red carpet but there was no sign of Walken. We thought Louie was kidding when he e-mailed that he would run our e-mail narrating our red-carpet woes waiting for the actor. "Waiting for Walken," blared the headline of our e-mail-turned-story the following day.

The "worst" he could say of his idol was this: "I think Walken when he was younger was too pretty." Of course, the rejoinders came: "But he's aging well. And he should have won the Oscar for 'Catch Me If You Can,' which I saw for the first time on DVD. And you think I'll forget your promise of his centerfold? Think again."

The year 2003 came with a greeting from him: "Happy new nyear (the nyear is intentional; sounds better that way)!"

He was ebullient because his e-mail account, which seemed to bog down often earlier, appeared to be fixed for good. "My e-mail is working! The gods are good!" he exclaimed. "But what matters more to

g the passing of Christopher Walken's biggest fan

me is the interview with the Great Wan."

News from us about Robert Redford posing with the INQUIRER was met with: "Redford is Redford, with or without the INQUIRER. But Walken reading the INQUIRER is like, well, like nothing else but Walken reading the INQUIRER. Please make him open the Entertainment section when you photograph him, so I can blow up and mount the photo and give it pride of place in my place. Walken makes me redundant."

He added, "Narciso (Chan, of then BMG Records) and I (and I brought Leah [Salterio] along) had a leisurely lunch last Sunday in cool Tagaytay while Manila was sweltering. He's also urging me to go visit CA. That's for the state, not the state of my health. I'm also paranoid. Maybe I'll come visit, when I go to Canada to visit my brother." By this time, he was already open to us about his health condition.

But even when he recited the litany of medical procedures that he had to endure, he ended with something whimsical like, "Suddenly, I'm out of things to say. When, oh when, will I ever get to visit Californiey?"

He was grim about his condition in only a few e-mails. "Been very busy at work and going through a flurry of scans and treatment, which goes on and on and on," he confided to us once. After admonishing us about a couple of things, he ended with, "Thank you. This is your editor speaking. And he's very worried about his sickness."

Breaking a rule

When we finally landed an interview with Walken, we couldn't wait to rise from our chair at the fabled Chateau Marmont to e-mail Louie. We broke a rule for the first time. We asked an interviewee for his autograph and, in this case, Walken graciously obliged. We immediately sent the autograph and a photo taken exactly according to Louie's wishes—the actor is shown holding a copy of the PDI Entertainment section.

Louie's response was predictably ecstatic: "I couldn't believe I now have the autograph of The Great The One The Only Christopher Walken, the Greatest Actor of All Time. Breathe. I love the photo, too. That hair! You could stand him on his head and plug one of his fingers into a socket and he just might turn into a floor polisher.

"We're getting more pages starting next week, Oct. 11, the day after the birthday of Christopher Walken's biggest fan in the world. Which means, the fan turns a year older and gets a lot more work.

"You don't know how much I appreciate this. Now at least he is somehow aware I exist and I'm in awe of him. I should have called you from my cell phone while you were interviewing him. Oh well. Now I'm thinking of meeting him in person."

Later, when we sent him a blow-up of the same photo, his response was just as enthusiastic. He also showed his joking nature on what would prove to be his last birthday celebration: "I got the poster today, a day after the birthday of Walken's younger alter ego. I spent the day at home in Sucat with my brothers and their families, and with Leah and a few other friends who planned to surprise me by coming unannounced but were surprised themselves when I went out in the morning and came back home after noon, making them wait until they were famished.

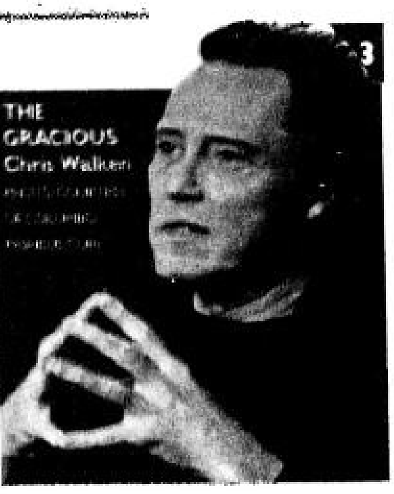
"When I came back, I saw their cars parked outside the house, so I knew they were there. I stayed in the car at the corner for many minutes while they and the family kept sending me text messages telling me to come home. It was a happy, good day all in all. And then the next day, FedEx delivered Walken."

Last promise

In one of his last e-mails to us, Louie wrote: "A growing number of people, friends and even strangers, have been very kind and helpful. The seizures that sent me to the hospital earlier this month were so far the scariest part of this condition. I hope they don't happen again. I pray fervently. There have been several groups, again, friends and strangers, that came to the house to pray over me. My faith grows stronger but it also needs constant propping up."

He talked about being back to work despite his health woes and his very restricted diet. Still, he tried to put some cheer in his note: "The oncologist has warned I would lose all my rich head of hair during the radiation, so I'll be shopping later for head wear. Fashionable, coordinated head wear. The neuro surgeon said he might raise the dosage [of my anti-convulsion pill] and he forbade me from driving, although I've been thinking of doing just that, driving, again soon."

He ended with, "Well, so there. I always seem to have stories to tell only when something untoward happens to me. Sorry about that. One of these days, I will have happy stories. Promise."



THE GRACIOUS Chris Walken

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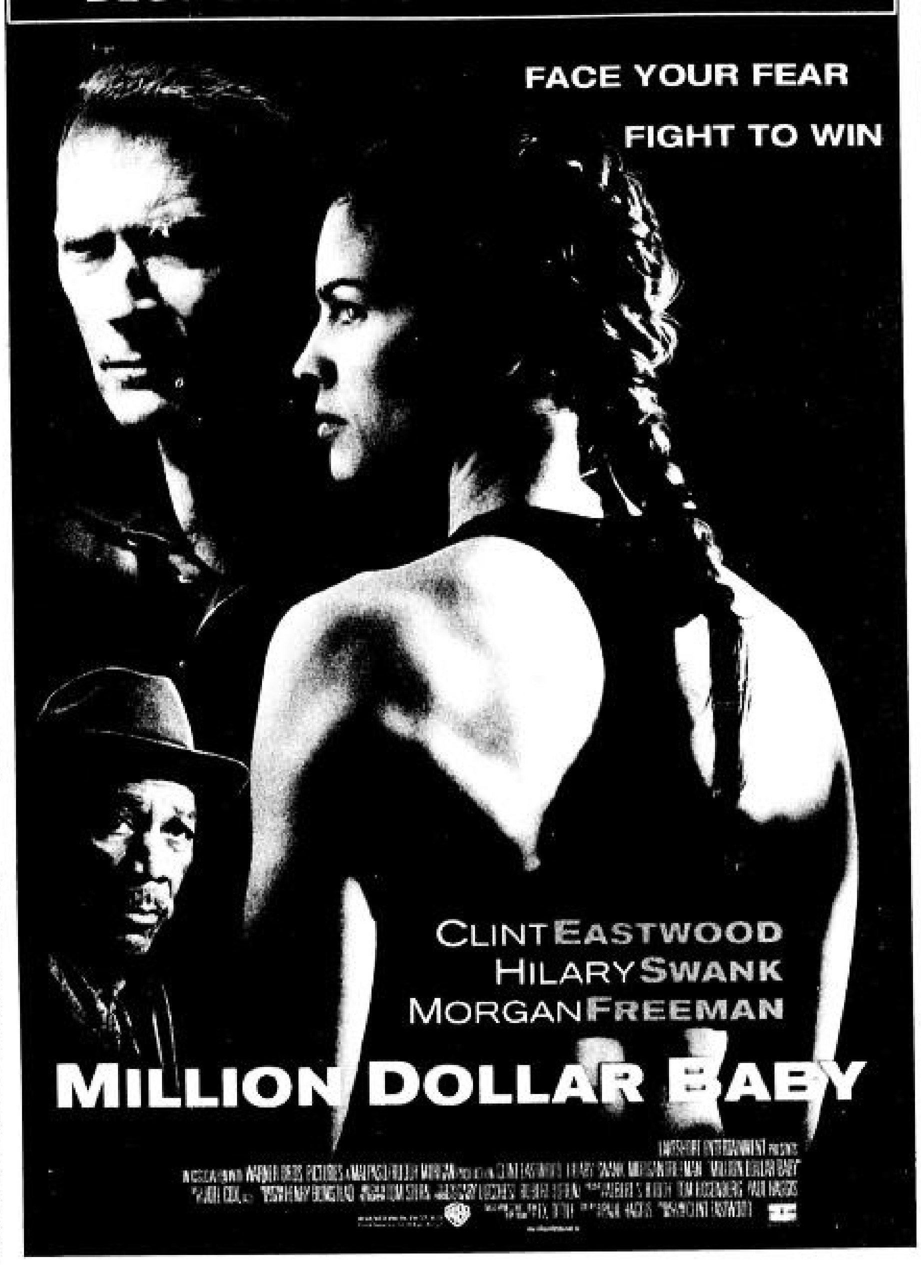

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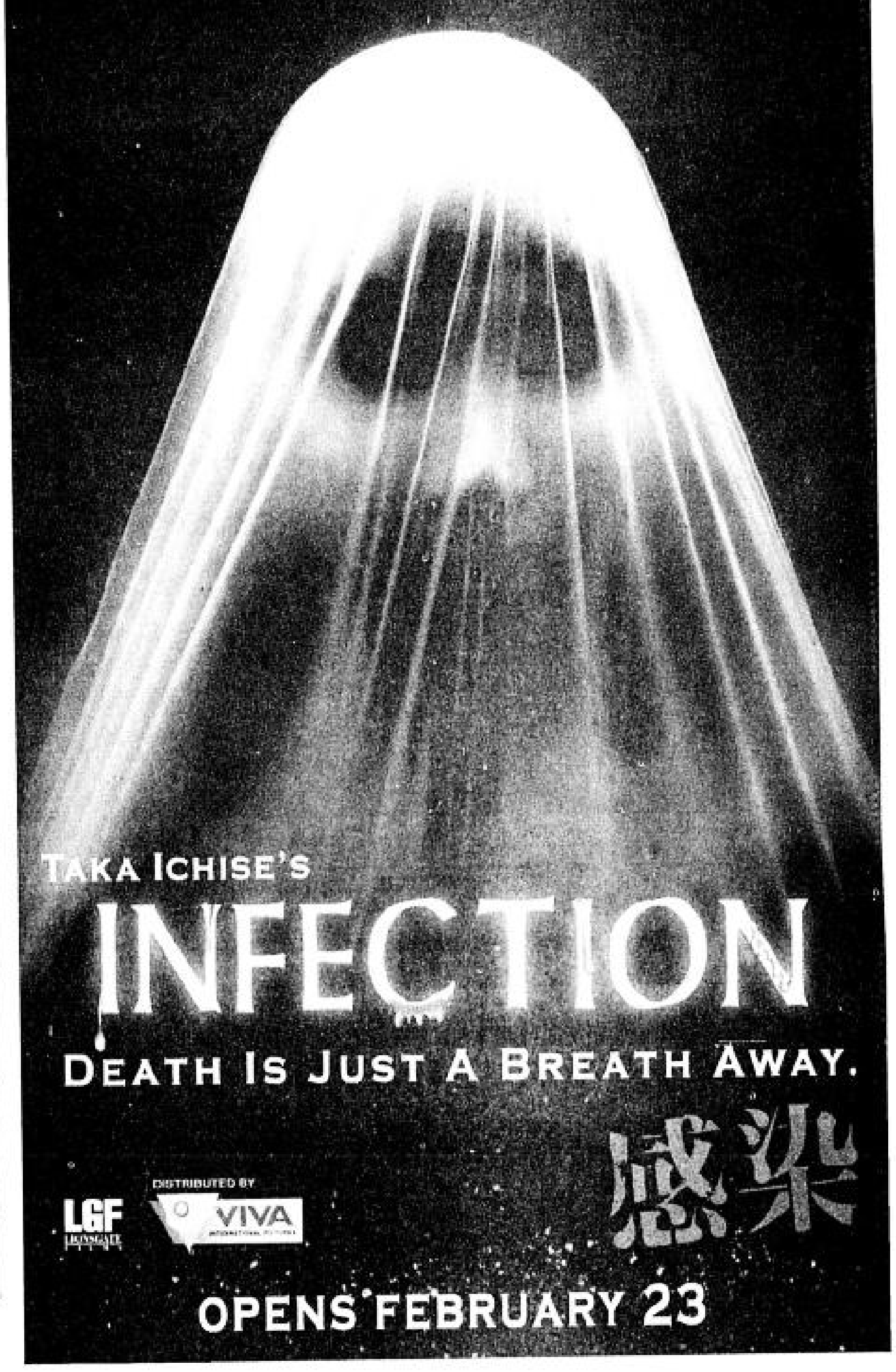

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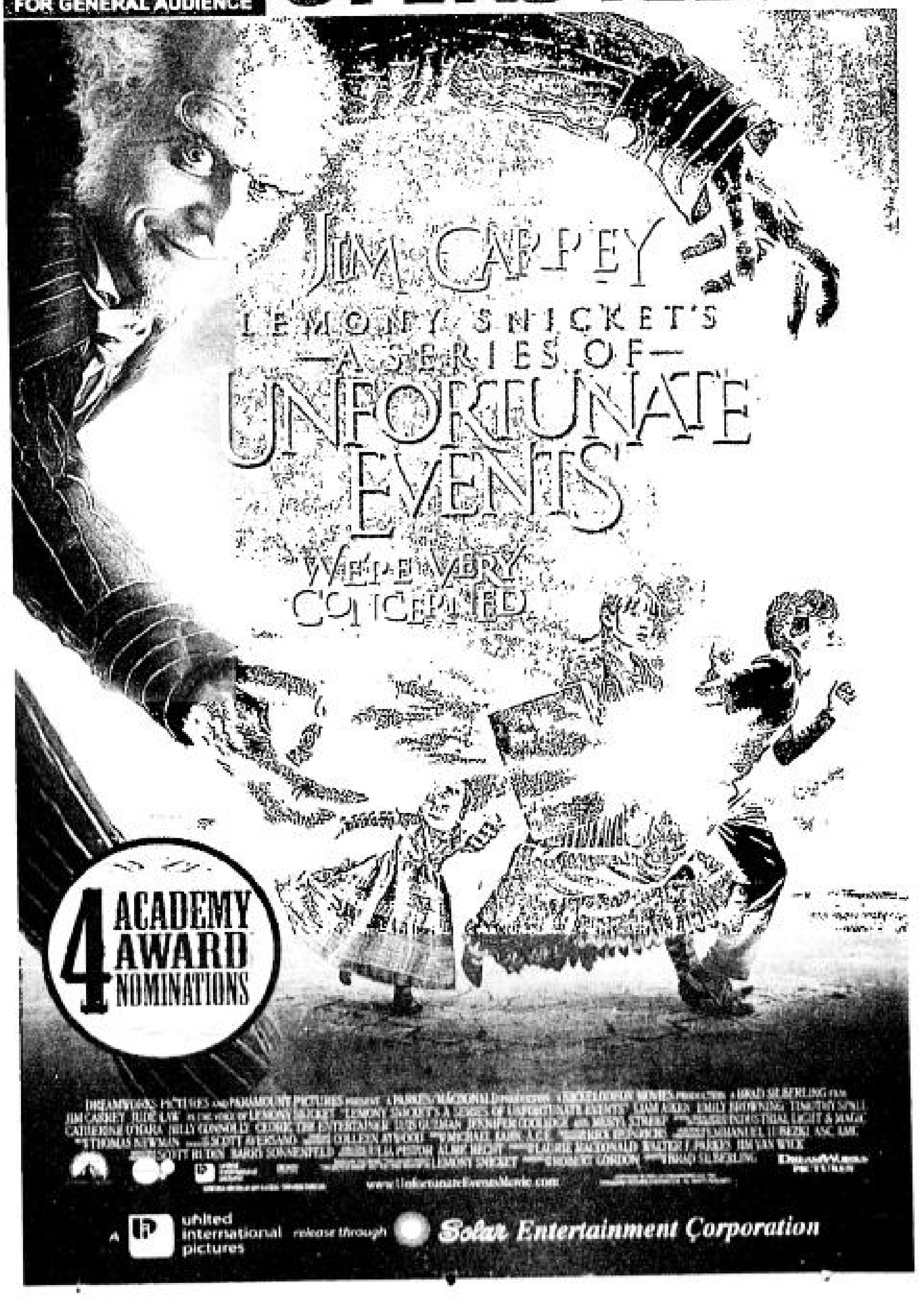
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3 GOLDEN GLOBE NOMINATIONS
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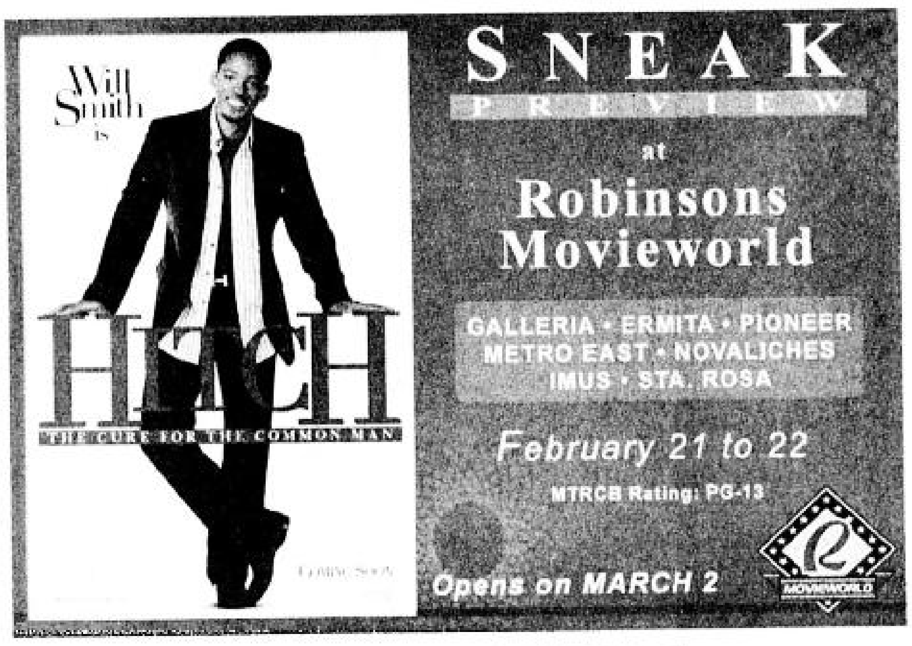
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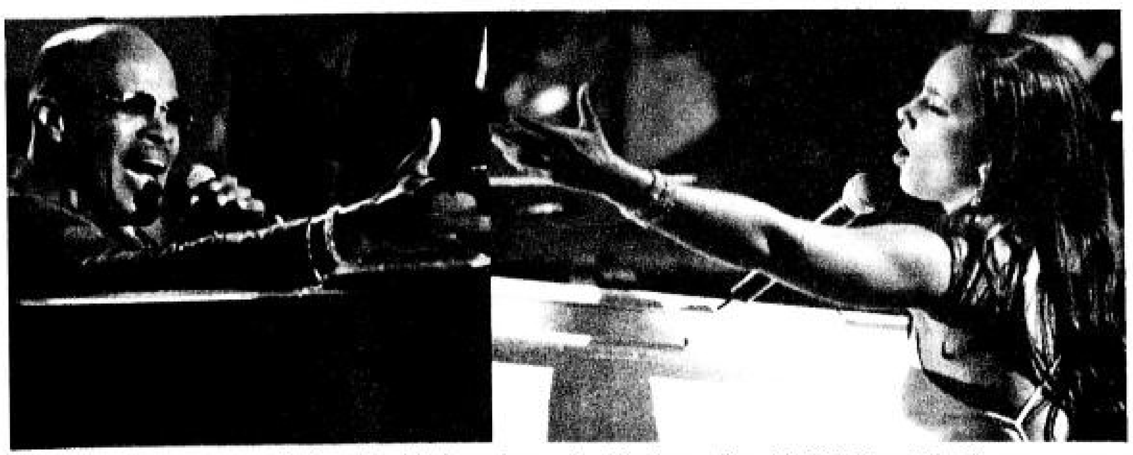


JAMIE FOXX, who portrays the singer in a biopic, performs a Ray Charles medley with Alicia Keys at the Grammys. REUTERS

'Genius Loves Company'

By Pocholo Concepcion
Contributor

"This may sound like sacrilege, but I think Ray Charles was more important than Elvis Presley."—Billy Joel

REVIEW

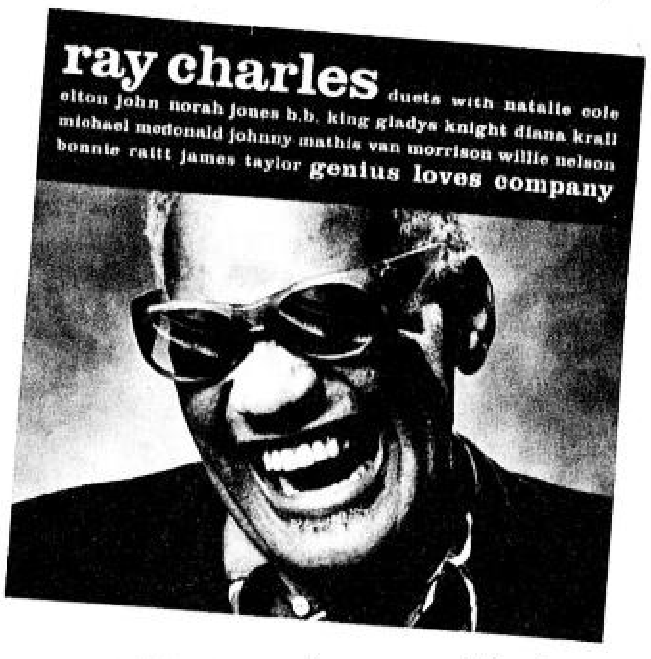
AND THAT is no exaggeration. In the course of a career that spanned almost six decades, Ray Charles was the first music artist who succeeded in putting so many musical genres together, in the process transforming them into a style that may have ultimately led to the birth of rock 'n' roll as we know it today.

It's difficult to find access to the more than 250 recordings he took part in, but for now "Genius Loves Company" will do. It's the last album Charles finished before he died at 73 from liver cancer last year.

"Genius Loves Company" is a special CD. It is Charles' first and only full-length duets album where he sings with the guest artists, plays the keyboards and jams with them in the same recording booth.

The guest list gathers 12 singers-songwriters—some are Charles' old friends, others idolized him or were influenced by his music. It is a luminous roster of some of the best pop, blues, jazz, country, soul, R&B and rock artists ever assembled for a single project.

The opening cut, Norah Jones and Charles harmonizing on piano and vocals in "Here We Go Again" (from the 1967 Charles album, "Listen"), sets the stage for what would unfold as a splendid listening experience.


ray charles duets with natalie cole elton john norah jones b.b. king gladys knight diana krall michael mcdonald johnny mathis van morrison willie nelson bonnie raitt james taylor genius loves company

It's clear the company loved Ray Charles' genius, too, in this Grammy winner

One after the other, songs as old as anybody's granddaddy come alive through the magical freshness and vitality only an artist like Charles could conjure.

The fun and pleasure Charles clearly had with Natalie Cole, for example, in their cover of "Fever" swings with an infectious vibe that transcends the original version made popular by Peggy Lee.

The ballads with Diana Krall ("You Don't Know Me"), Bonnie Raitt ("Do I Ever Cross Your Mind?") and Elton John ("Sorry Seems To Be The Hardest Word") would rekindle a passion for romance especially for listeners in relationships gone sour or currently in rough sailing.

What makes Charles so effective as a singer is his ability to express specific emotions with the slightest deviation in his tone or phrasing, a skill that comes off so effortlessly, it could only emanate from the recesses of the soul. That is, a soul that has experienced much pain.

In Charles' case, it is the seeming helplessness of living in poverty and in darkness, to boot, plus the harshness of racism at the time that he was still a struggling musician. The sheer will to put his talent to good use eventually got him noticed by legendary producers like Ahmet Ertegun and Jerry Wexler, paving the way to fortune and fame.

So whether he's reinterpreting 1960s pop with Michael McDonald in "Hey Girl," classic blues with B.B. King in "Sinner's Prayer," Tin Pan Alley with Johnny Mathis in "Over the Rainbow," or good old gospel with Gladys Knight in "Heaven Help Us All," there emerges an incomparable stamp of the authenticity that earned Ray Charles the title "Genius of Soul."

All of the tracks, including his wistful introspection (with Willy Nelson) in "It Was A Very Good Year" and expression of faith (with Van Morrison) in "Crazy Love," feature excellent club band or full orchestral arrangements. Which could also explain why this album recently won eight Grammys including Album of the Year, Record of the Year, Best Pop Album, Best Pop Collaboration, Best Instrumental Arrangement Accompanying a Vocalist, Best Gospel Performance, Best Engineered Album and Best Surround Album.

NORAH JONES accepts Grammy for her collaboration with Charles. AP

8 KEYS TO YOUR DIFFERENT INTERESTS

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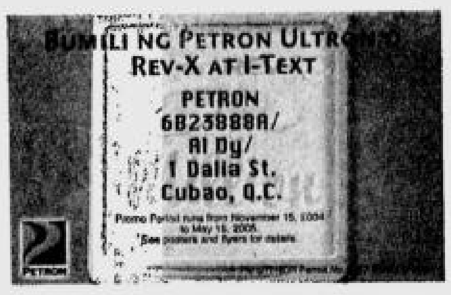

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VAT delay worries foreign fund managers

By Michelle V. Remo

FOREIGN fund managers are concerned over the slow progress of the Arroyo administration's proposal to raise the value-added tax rate from 10 to 12 percent, believing that the government's efforts to put its fiscal house in order hinged largely on the unpopular tax measure.

Finance Undersecretary Eric Recto said fund managers from the United States, the United Kingdom and Singapore stressed this during his recent meeting with them wherein they also warned that failure to immediately implement the VAT increase would be detrimental to the ongoing fiscal reform program.

The DOF said non-passage of the VAT increase could encourage the international credit market to close its doors on the Philippines.

"Beyond higher interest rates, the lack of access to the capital markets will become a distinct possibility (without the VAT increase)," Recto said in a briefing with reporters.

He said the DOF did not yet see a need to adjust its foreign borrowing plans for the year despite the recent two-notch downgrade of the Philippines' credit rating by Moody's Investors Service and the earlier one-notch downgrade by Standard & Poor's. He said the downgrades seemed to have already been discounted by the credit market.

However, Recto said the Philippines "cannot push its luck too far," stressing that while the consecutive credit downgrades have been practically shrugged off, the market was keen on seeing progress in the VAT proposal.

The government has already raised $1.5 billion of its $4-billion foreign-borrowing requirement for the year through a bond issue concluded before the Moody's downgrade this month. Recto, who is in charge of the government's foreign borrowing program, said the government intended to tap the foreign market for the remainder of its financing requirement by the second half of the year.

The finance official said that while there were no indications yet of a negative market response against the Philippines due to the downgrades, the next month or two would be crucial in shaping the foreign creditors' confidence in the country's fiscal health.

"They are focusing on our efforts to have the VAT reform implemented," Recto said. He added that while there were two VAT-related measures, the other

VAT/B2

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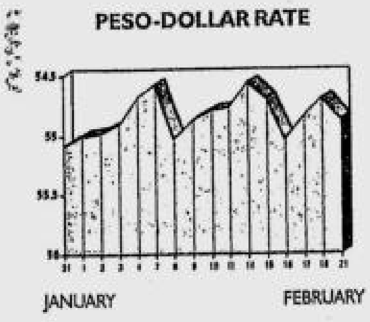

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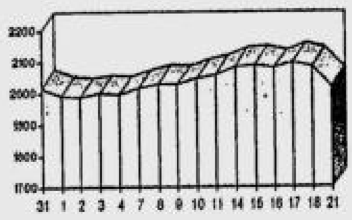


(See stock market report on Page B2)

SHARES prices closed 3.03 percent lower yesterday, falling sharply in a continued technical correction following recent gains that had brought the main index to five-year highs, dealers said.

They said the market had clearly been overbought and last week's two-notch sovereign ratings' downgrade by Moody's Investors Service may have been a reality check, prompting investors to take at least some profit.

The Philippine Stock Exchange composite index fell 63.27 points to a two-week low of 2,022.66. It traded between 2,016.49 and 2,085.93.

Volume was 7.78 billion shares worth P1.74 billion after Friday's 6.01 billion shares worth P1.86 billion.

Losers beat gainers 92 to 26, with 42 stocks unchanged.

Dealers said the breach of the 2,070 and then 2,050 support levels led to a deeper correction.

"We've been at overbought levels for quite some time and a correction has long been expected. I see the next support at 1,970 if the 2,020 support does not hold," said Ron Rodrigo of Accord Capital Equities.

AFP

Deal on merger of ATM networks seen by July

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE COUNTRY'S automated teller machine networks can reach a memorandum of understanding to merge before Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Governor Rafael Buenaventura's term ends this July, according to the former chief of the Megalink ATM consortium.

Bank of Commerce president Raul de Mesa said he believed an agreement in principle between at least two if not all of the country's three ATM networks would be possible by July, in line with Buenaventura's wishes.

A year ago, Buenaventura has vowed to push for the consolidation of Megalink, BancNet and ExpressNet before he steps down as BSP chief.

"I don't think there's a timetable for the merger but the three would have to agree first whether they'd like to merge or not," De Mesa said.

"Personally, I think it makes sense for the three to merge," he said, noting there had been talk among the ATM networks leading to this direction.

"If you look at several things, (for instance) the benefit to your consumer, hopefully that would give you a faster turnaround, lower rates, plus lower cost. I think the market is not that big," he said.

In the case of Megalink, De Mesa said its members had al-

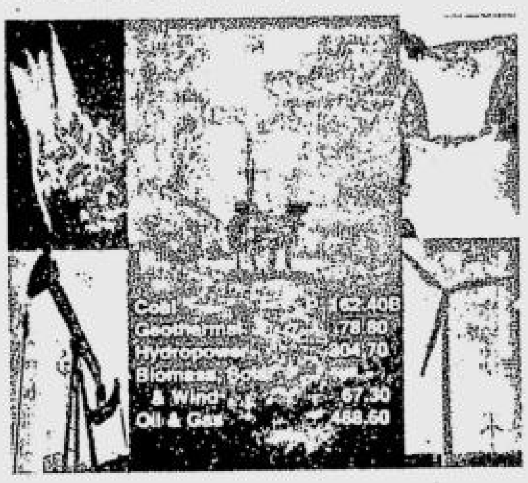
DEAL/B4

INQUIRER MONITOR

Figures that matter in our nation's life

Energy investment requirements

(2005 to 2014, in billion pesos)



Source: Department of Energy

WITHIN 9 years, investment requirements for the development of the country's energy resources are projected to reach P1.1trillion or over $20 billion.

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This bull market will not be cowed

MR. BEARBULL

Ron Nathan

I RECEIVE many e-mails and I try to answer them all, but some are simply outside my area of expertise. Here are some of them:

Why doesn't glue stick to the bottle?

Why do they use sterilized needles for lethal injection?

Who put an 'S' in the word lisp?

If you send someone polystyrene, how do you pack it?

If it's true that we are here to help others, what are the others doing here?

Why do round pizzas come in square boxes?

Two women used to knock on our door every Sunday trying to convert us to a religion that refuses medical treatment and blood transfusions. After three futile months, they knocked on the door to sell oil to my wife for cosmetic use. I now call them Jojobas Witnesses.

I went to the doctor and told him that I hurt all over. "When I put my finger on my arm, it hurts. When I put it on my knee, it hurts. Even when I put it on my chest, it hurts. What's wrong with me?" The doctor looked at me and said, "You've got a broken finger."

My wife said she needed more space so I locked her outside. When women get depressed, they eat or go shopping; when men are depressed, they invade another country. I once tried phone sex and got an ear infection.

A boy said to Michael Jackson, "I think you're a pervert." Michael replied, "That's a big word for a 9-year-old." (Jay Leno).

* * *

I do not feel happy about the stock market because it has developed euphoria, probably caught it from Wall Street. Last week, when three bombs exploded, the index opened 35 points lower but closed five points higher. Two days later, Moody's downgraded us by two notches but by the following day, the market was at a new 5-year high. Now the Senate is prevaricating over the VAT bill and will probably settle for another watered-down version. But no matter how bad the news is, investors don't care.

Last Thursday, I saw four stocks go limit up and there may have been more. Foreign money is pouring into AC, FPH and other blue chips while local money is chasing second and third liners like MPC, BEL, SINO and APC. And both foreign and local money poured into Manila Water, which is heavily oversubscribed. Last week, well over P1 billion was invested in Philippine stocks. Tiny compared with other Asian countries but enough to send our embryonic market surging to new highs. Even yesterday, Monday, foreign brokers were net buyers of P83 million.

Are we going to have a repetition of 1996 when the Phisix rose steadily all year without any significant correction? In November and December, the pace accelerated, reaching a peak of 3,420 on Jan. 9, 1997. Then it fell steadily until April and thereafter rallied, fell, rallied, and fell until it finally slid twice below 1,000. Even though it has now doubled, it is still far below its peak eight years ago, and if you allow for inflation, we are only about 40 percent of the peak in real terms. I remember BPC at P20 and MERB at P158.

I hope we are not going to have a replay, forced upon us by a never-ending stream of foreign money that can disappear just as quickly as it came in. I agree that we have almost certainly seen the worst and that the Phisix will end the year higher than it is now. But I would be happier if we could have a substantial correction because I feel that an air of unreality is enveloping investors. All this speculation in obscure stocks is unhealthy and usually signifies an impending top.

One thing that might stop the rise is next month's IPO of SM Investments. This is an excellent investment comprising SMPH, SMDC and Shoemart Inc. (the driving force behind the SY Empire). However, it is a huge issue and depending on how many shares are issued and at what price, this could take P17 to P42 billion out of the market. The major portion will come from foreign investment but the amount involved dwarfs their daily inflow so it might dry up. Do the calculation yourself. If foreign investors have to put in the maximum of P28 billion, that is equal to seven months investing at P200M a day. And I have not even allowed for it being oversubscribed.

In our market too, it would siphon off a huge amount of money especially as it is preceded by Manila Water, itself a guaranteed success. Where will all this money come from? Do investors have this much spare cash or will they sell other equities to finance the IPO? If so, we can expect selling to start soon. The risk factor fell from 95 (overbought) to 77 (a sell signal) and is now 70. Purely on a technical analysis view, the market should correct very soon.

Note: I wrote this article on Sunday to send to the INQUIRER on Monday but the market has preempted me by falling 63 points. My only consolation is that I told subscribers to sell last Wednesday and again on Friday. I only write once a week and on a fixed day so the chance of a buy or sell signal coinciding with my article is only 1 in 5, not good odds.

* * *

When Cemco made a P6 bid for UCC through a holding company UCMC, and did not bid for the remaining minority, the SEC ruled that it was legal. I wrote that this decision was totally wrong because it blew the Minority Act out of the water. Strong words but justified. To its credit, the SEC, faced with a pending court case from Nation Life which holds 45 million shares, has reversed its decision.

Unfortunately, the short statement left the matter as clear as mud and UCC (now Holcim) fluctuated between P4.75 and P3.90. Nobody understood what it meant. Since then, a 13-page draft was issued, which I have not yet seen, but two lawyers who read it, were completely baffled. If it means that the bid applies to anyone holding or buying the shares now, the price should be close to P6, not P4. If it only applies to those who held it before the bid (more likely), then what happens to the people who sold it because of the original SEC decision? Will Cemco have to track them down and compensate them? It is a messy business.

Having made the correct decision now, the SEC should explain unequivocally what its statement means. Is there an ex-date and, if so, when is it? The shares are worth either P6 or P3, but nobody knows which is correct. The sooner it is cleared up, the better. At least, it would appear that justice has prevailed.

mrbearbull@hotmail.com

Ayala's IMI acquires electronics manufacturing assets of US firm

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

EXPANDING its network into the North American market, Ayala-controlled Integrated Microelectronics Inc. (IMI) yesterday announced it had completed its purchase of the electronics manufacturing assets of California-based Saturn Electronics & Engineering (Tustin) Inc. and its Philippine subsidiary, Saturn Electronics Philippines Inc.

In a statement, IMI, a leading electronics manufacturing service (EMS) provider in the country, said it had acquired the EMS and original design manufacturing (ODM) assets of Saturn.

However, the company declined to reveal the amount paid for the purchase citing confidentiality agreements.

The deal allows IMI to take advantage of Saturn Tustin's facilities in Tustin, California, which include state-of-the-art technology, a design center and a program management center.

Under the deal, IMI also acquired Saturn's assembly facilities in Cebu.

"The acquisition of the EMS/ODM assets of Saturn Tustin enhances our capabilities in the areas of product design and development, manufacturing process development, and flip chip assembly, enabling us to provide competitively superior complete solutions to our customers," Arthur R. Tan, president and chief executive officer of IMI said.

"Further, it supports our goal of expanding our reach in our global target markets, especially in the North American market," Tan further said.

IMI is mainly into electronics services. Its manufacturing facility is in Laguna. The bulk of its earnings come from the production of hard disks and optical disks.

Ayala Corp. owns 78.8 percent of IMI while local chemical firm, Resins Inc., holds roughly 19.7 percent.

IMI is into an aggressive expansion mode this year and is being groomed as a regional player, Ayala president Jaime Augusto Zobel de Ayala II earlier said.

Richard Bell, the former sales director of Saturn Tustin, will take charge of IMI's sales efforts in the North American region.

"By leveraging the strengths and complementary capabilities of Saturn Tustin, IMI will pursue global outsourcing opportunities more aggressively," Tan added.

The sale will enable Saturn Electronics and Engineering Inc. to focus on its core automotive and electronics businesses.

Saturn will continue to maintain its global product design and purchasing teams in North America and the Far East. The sale will not affect any of Saturn's automotive business or non-flexible circuit electronics business.

IMI offers core manufacturing capabilities including printed circuit board assembly, which is found in almost all electronic devices that interconnects electronic components without discrete wires.

COAL-TO-GASOLINE CONVERSION

Deal seen creating business opportunities

By Abigail L. Ho

APART from possibly making the country the next regional hub for coal-derived fuel, the recently signed memorandum of understanding between the government and American firm Headwaters Inc. could also pave the way for the establishment of a 200-megawatt (MW) power plant.

Under the MOU, Headwaters will conduct a feasibility study on the use of the country's indigenous coal for conversion into "ultra-clean" gasoline or diesel.

A pilot plant to be fed 25 kilograms of coal a day will be set up as part of the feasibility study. This plant will determine the suitability of local coal to Headwater's coal-into-fuel technology.

If found feasible, a commercial arrangement between the Department of Energy and Headwaters would be drafted. For commercial operations, a coal conversion plant capable of producing 50,000 to 70,000 barrels of fuel per day would be constructed.

Energy Undersecretary Peter Anthony Abaya said the steam produced during the coal conversion process could actually be used to a power a generation facility capable of producing some 200 MW of electricity.

"Maybe they [Headwaters] can put the steam to good use since we're now trying to avert a power crisis," he said.

He added that Headwaters' presence in the Philippines could also possibly give rise to a good business that would, at the same time, help alleviate the harmful effects of coal combustion on the environment.

Headwaters, he said, was also in the business of buying fly ash, or the minute ash particles arising from coal combustion, usually from power generation facilities.

Fly ash, like what is being done in the United States, can be used to supplement or substitute the Portland cement component of concrete.

Instead of throwing away all the fly ash produced by the country's coal-fired power plants, Abaya said this could be sold to companies like Headwaters, which finds ways to utilize the coal-burning by-product.

VAT delay . . .

From page B1

one being the lifting of VAT exemption, the market seemed to look more closely on the progress of the increase in the VAT rate to 12 percent.

Lifting VAT exemptions of selected products and services that are currently VAT-exempt is estimated to yield P28 billion in additional revenue a year, while the plan to raise the VAT rate is expected to contributed P35 billion in incremental revenue a year for the fiscally troubled government.

Having the biggest revenue impact among all revenue-raising measures, the proposed increase in the VAT rate is considered a priority for legislation by the Arroyo administration. But the proposal, which has been tagged as anti-poor by critics, is facing rough sailing in Congress due to opposition by some senators.

The Senate committee on ways and means, chaired by Sen. Ralph Recto, favors only the lifting of VAT exemption but has expressed non-interest in passing the VAT-increase plan.

DISCLOSURES

CAEZAR Evangelista, AVP of **Chinabank Corp.**, disposed of 210 shares of the company.

* * *

EDWARD Tortorici, director of **Metro Pacific Corp.**, bought 6.2 million shares of the company at P0.59.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL Container Terminal Services Inc. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on April 21. Record date is March 15.

* * *

SAN MIGUEL Corp. disclosed that the record date for its rights offering of additional shares equivalent to 10 percent of its outstanding capital stock has been moved from Feb. 28 to March 7.

* * *

GLOBE Telecom said Moody's downgrade of its foreign currency senior implied and senior unsecured bond ratings had no immediate impact on its debt-raising activities since it had no plan to tap the international markets this year. *Compiled by D.J. Yap, PDI Research*

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of February 21, 2005)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS & FINANCIAL SERVICES					
BANKS					
Asiatrust Dev. Bank Inc.	4.7	4.7	4.7	4.7	21,000
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	29	29	28.5	28.5	82,400
Bank of the Phil. Islands	57.5	57.5	56	56	719,700
China Banking Corp.	640	650	640	650	1,400
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	49	49	48	48	70,900
Export and Ind. Bank Inc.	0.95	1	0.9	0.92	28,520,000
International Exch. Bank	19.25	19.25	19	19	75,000
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	39.5	39.5	38	38.5	2,039,800
Philippine National Bank	34	34.5	30.5	32	182,400
Rizal Comm. Banking Corp.	15.25	15.5	15	15.5	11,300
Security Bank Corp.	33	33	32.5	32.5	90,000
Union Bank of the Phil.	29.5	29.5	29	29	17,900
FINANCIAL SERVICES					
Bankard Inc.	1.1	1.12	1.1	1.1	421,000
First Abacus Financial	0.55	0.55	0.55	0.55	460,000
First Metro Invest. Corp.	270	280	270	270	25,010
Manulife Financial Corp.	2510	2520	2510	2520	1,680
PCI Leasing & Fin. Inc.	2.12	2.12	2.1	2.1	79,000
Sun Life Financial Inc.	1760	1760	1760	1760	480
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL					
COMMUNICATION					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	17.5	17.5	17	17	16,500
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	1.58	1.58	1.48	1.52	10,094,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	930	930	910	910	11,130
Ipeople Inc.	4.7	4.7	4.65	4.7	142,000
Island Info and Tech Inc.	0.0575	0.06	0.0525	0.0575	18,800,000
ISM Communications Corp.	0.04	0.0575	0.04	0.0575	150,400,000
Manila Bulletin Pub. Corp.	2.2	2.2	2.2	2.2	38,000
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	3.65	3.65	3.45	3.45	8,458,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	1400	1400	1350	1355	142,560
Ivantage Corp.	0.85	0.85	0.76	0.76	25,190,000
Philweb Corp.	0.012	0.016	0.012	0.016	2,692,100,000
POWER & ENERGY					
Manila Electric Co. A	17.5	17.5	17.25	17.25	70,800
Manila Electric Co. B	26.5	27	26	26	857,700
Petron Corp.	3.95	3.95	3.8	3.8	4,915,000
Salcon Power Corp.	2.2	2.2	2.2	2.2	60,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	1.62	1.62	1.58	1.6	2,715,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	2	2.06	1.94	1.96	1,535,000
Aboitiz Trans. Sys. Corp.	1.8	1.8	1.74	1.8	250,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	7.9	7.9	7.7	7.8	2,381,000
Keppel Phils. Marine Inc.	0.52	0.55	0.52	0.55	440,000
Lorenzo Shipping Corp.	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	590,000
CONSTRUCTION & OTHER RELATED PRODUCTS					
Engineering Equip. Inc.	0.56	0.57	0.55	0.55	1,320,000
Fortune Cement Corp.	1.02	1.02	1	1	100,000
Holcim Philippines Inc.	4.05	4.2	4	4	8,225,000
FOOD, BEVERAGES & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	4	4.2	4	4	647,000
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	38	38	37.5	37.5	137,500
Jollibee Foods Corp.	28.5	28.5	28	28	691,300
Pancake House Inc.	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3	50,000
RFM Corp.	0.96	1	0.96	0.96	150,000
Swift Food Inc.	0.4	0.41	0.4	0.41	120,000
San Miguel Corp. A	57.5	57.5	57.5	57.5	161,600
San Miguel Corp. B	81	81	80.5	80.5	37,100
Vitarich Corp.	0.3	0.3	0.29	0.3	1,110,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Atok-Big Wedge Co. Inc.	11	11	11	11	6,000
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.011	0.012	0.011	0.011	322,300,000
Abacus Con Res & Hdg B	0.013	0.013	0.011	0.011	75,200,000
Ayala Corp.	8.2	8.2	7.7	7.7	18,567,000
Alsons Cons. Res. Inc.	0.7	0.7	0.65	0.65	650,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	4.6	4.6	4.4	4.45	801,000
Ajo.Net Holdings Inc.	0.037	0.044	0.035	0.044	103,500,000
A. Soriano Corp.	2.2	2.2	2.16	2.16	221,000
APC Group Inc.	0.53	0.55	0.45	0.48	25,460,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.0085	0.0085	0.0085	0.0085	43,000,000
Anglo Phil Holdings Corp.	0.43	0.43	0.43	0.43	320,000
Baguio Gold Holdings Corp.	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	32,000
Balabac Resources & Hldgs	0.94	0.94	0.92	0.92	230,000
Bacnotan Cons Indus Inc.	19.75	20	19.75	20	9,800
Boulevard Holdings Inc.	0.165	0.165	0.16	0.16	2,770,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	1.36	1.44	1.26	1.26	65,779,000
A Brown Company Inc.	0.9	0.91	0.9	0.91	400,000
Basic Consolidated Inc.	0.225	0.225	0.225	0.225	520,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.28	0.28	0.26	0.27	4,680,000
Southeast Asian Cement	0.64	0.64	0.61	0.61	990,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	4.1	4.1	4	4	2,081,000
Ever-Gotesco Resources	0.0675	0.0675	0.065	0.065	2,600,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	1.46	1.46	1.44	1.44	345,000
Fil-Hispano Holdings Corp.	9.4	9.5	9.3	9.3	1,083,000
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	50	50	49.5	50	2,110,200
Forum Pacific Inc.	0.28	0.29	0.28	0.29	1,450,000
Global Equities Inc.	0.12	0.12	0.105	0.105	27,920,000
House Of Investments Inc.	1.86	1.86	1.8	1.8	661,000
Ionics Inc.	1.82	1.82	1.76	1.76	530,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	3.35	3.35	3.25	3.3	452,000
Macroasia Corp.	2.22	2.22	2.2	2.2	171,000
Marsteel Cons. Inc. A	0.018	0.018	0.018	0.018	4,000,000
Marsteel Cons. Inc. B	0.02	0.022	0.02	0.022	2,000,000
Medco Holdings	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	100,000
Megaworld Corp.	1.68	1.68	1.64	1.64	1,855,000
Multitech Inv. Corp.	0.37	0.37	0.37	0.37	500,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.63	0.65	0.59	0.61	87,770,000
Polar Property Holdings	2	2.5	2	2	27,000
Prime Orion Phils. Inc.	0.4	0.4	0.38	0.38	1,930,000
Prima Media Holdings Inc.	1.32	1.32	1.3	1.3	116,000
East Asia Power Res. Corp.	0.4	0.4	0.38	0.38	1,620,000
Roxas Holdings Inc.	1.08	1.08	1.04	1.04	121,000
Solid Group Inc.	0.65	0.65	0.62	0.63	930,000
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.165	0.165	0.15	0.15	7,350,000
Wellex Industries Inc.	0.24	0.24	0.21	0.21	1,520,000
MANUFACTURING, DISTRIBUTION & TRADING					
Active Alliance Inc.	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	40,000
Interphil Labs Inc. A	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.8	10,000
Metro Alliance Hldgs B	0.41	0.41	0.41	0.41	240,000
Matsushita Elec Phil Corp.	8.1	8.1	8	8	18,000
Music Semiconductors Corp.	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.8	50,000
Mabuhay Vinyl Corp.	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.9	50,000
Picop Resources Inc.	0.14	0.14	0.115	0.13	13,230,000
HOTEL, RECREATION & OTHER SERVICES					
Belle Corp.	1.64	1.72	1.54	1.58	29,622,000
Fairmont Holdings Inc.	1.3	1.38	1.26	1.26	8,719,000
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	0.95	1.06	0.94	1.06	9,320,000
Manila Jockey Club	5	5	4.8	4.9	56,000
Premiere Ent. Prod. Inc.	0.4	0.4	0.38	0.38	2,220,000
BONDS, PREFERRED & WARRANTS					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp. (Pdr)	17.25	17.5	17	17.25	439,000
PLDT (10% Pref) Series O	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	100
PLDT (10% Pref) Series T	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	1,700
PLDT (10% Pref) Series U	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	100
PLDT (10% Pref) Series V	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	3,900
PLDT (10% Pref) Series X	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	100
PLDT (10% Pref) Series Z	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	100
PLDT 10% Pref Series Aa	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	5,200
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	9.4	9.4	9.2	9.2	19,626,000
Araneta Properties Inc.	0.42	0.42	0.42	0.42	100,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	0.88	0.88	0.88	0.88	70,000
C & P Homes Inc.	0.36	0.36	0.34	0.34	2,950,000
Cebu Prop. Vent B	0.52	0.52	0.52	0.52	50,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.33	0.34	0.31	0.32	32,090,000
EIB Realty Developers Inc.	0.37	0.39	0.34	0.34	760,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.54	0.54	0.52	0.53	9,810,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.7	1.8	1.7	1.72	6,508,000
Gotesco Land Inc.B	0.21	0.21	0.21	0.21	110,000
Keppel Phils. Prop. Inc.	0.7	0.74	0.7	0.74	160,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.27	0.27	0.26	0.27	3,060,000
Fil-Estate Land Inc.	0.8	0.8	0.78	0.78	30,000
MRC Allied Ind. Inc.	0.22	0.22	0.22	0.22	740,000
Philippine Estates Corp.	0.22	0.22	0.195	0.195	790,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.8	31,000
Phil Realty And Holdings	0.33	0.34	0.31	0.31	3,510,000
SM Development Corp.	1.98	2	1.8	1.8	1,106,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	8.4	8.5	7.8	8.1	22,221,000
MINING					
Apex Mining Co. Inc. A	1.24	1.24	1.2	1.2	250,000
Apex Mining Co. Inc. B	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3	130,000
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.013	0.013	0.013	0.013	29,000,000
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	7.3	7.3	7.1	7.1	531,000
Benguet Corp. B	13	13	13	13	1,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.4	0.4	0.39	0.4	15,710,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co B	0.44	0.44	0.42	0.43	6,660,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.022	0.022	0.02	0.021	60,300,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.029	0.03	0.028	0.028	231,200,000
Omico Corp.	0.009	0.0095	0.008	0.0085	2,783,000,000
Philex Mining Corp. A	1.24	1.26	1.16	1.2	1,233,000
Philex Mining Corp. B	1.52	1.54	1.42	1.44	10,118,000
Semirara Mining Corp.	45	45	43.5	43.5	492,400
United Paragon Mining Co.	0.34	0.35	0.34	0.35	110,000
OIL					
Imperial Res.	0.015	0.015	0.014	0.014	12,000,000
Interport Res.	0.0075	0.008	0.0065	0.0065	54,000,000
Interport Res. B	0.0075	0.0085	0.007	0.007	136,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.008	0.008	0.0075	0.0075	185,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.008	0.0085	0.008	0.008	23,000,000
The Philodrill Corp. A	0.37	0.37	0.37	0.37	130,000
The Philodrill Corp. B	0.38	0.38	0.38	0.38	580,000
Pacifica	0.014	0.016	0.014	0.015	163,000,000
Petroenergy Res. Corp.	2.6	2.6	2.6	2.6	2,000
Sinophil Corp.	0.2	0.225	0.175	0.195	63,870,000
Vulcan Ind'l	0.4	0.4	0.38	0.38	740,000

CURRENCIES

February 21, 2005 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.764642912	1.000000	54.689
Japan	Yen	0.007242	0.009471	0.518
United Kingdom	Pound	1.448922	1.894900	103.630
Hongkong	Dollar	0.098036	0.128212	7.011
Switzerland	Franc	0.646633	0.845666	46.2486
Canada	Dollar	0.620954	0.812084	44.4121
Singapore	Dollar	0.466672	0.610314	33.3775
Australia	Dollar	0.601939	0.787216	43.0521
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.028284	2.652590	145.0675
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.203905	0.266667	14.5838
Brunei	Dollar	0.465253	0.608458	33.2760
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000083	0.000108	0.0059
Thailand	Baht	0.019842	0.025950	1.4192
UAE	Dirham	0.208185	0.272264	14.8898
Euro	Euro	1	1.307800	71.5223
Argentina	Peso	0.263216	0.344234	18.8258
Brazil	REAL	0.298455	0.390320	21.3462
Denmark	Kroner	0.134343	0.175694	9.6085
India	Rupee	0.017486	0.022868	1.2506
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.201249	0.263193	14.3936
Mexico	New Peso	0.069064	0.090322	4.9396
New Zealand	Dollar	0.552368	0.722387	39.5066
South Africa	Rand	0.12879	0.168432	9.2114
Korea	Won	0.000747	0.000977	0.0534
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.024305	0.031786	1.7383

American, Chinese groups eye SLEX rehab

By Clarissa S. Batino

AT LEAST two foreign groups have expressed interest to bid for P10-billion rehabilitation of the South Luzon Expressway after Philippine National Construction Corp. terminated last month its joint-venture agreement with a private consortium, the PNCC's top official said.

PNCC chair Pastor Ramos said an American and a Chinese group have expressed interest in the project. He identified the American group as Pacific Synergy International, but said he could not recall the name of the Chinese firm.

"We plan to get another joint-venture partner for the project after we have terminated our agreement with Hopewell. We need a partner to finance the huge amount needed to rehabilitate SLEX," Ramos said in an interview.

The PNCC chief said that the agency was trying to work out a co-financing arrangement together with the Department of Public Works and Highways so it could proceed with the civil works repair of SLEX while the agency was trying to find another partner.

About 200,000 motorists pass through the SLEX daily while 60 percent of Luzon's produce also pass through the highway going to the south.

"We are also looking at our internal finances to see what portion of our revenue from toll collection could be used to help fund the SLEX rehab," he said.

Hopewell Crown Infrastructure Inc. earlier said the PNCC had no legal basis to terminate the joint venture deal.

Its president, Joel Bañares, said that the private consortium was financially capable of undertaking the SLEX project, especially after Malaysia's MTD Capital Berhad agreed to own 67 percent of the company.

Hopewell Crown owns 80 percent of South Luzon Tollway Corp., a joint venture with the PNCC tasked to rehabilitate and eventually operate the Slex tollway.

Ramos said that Hopewell had not moved the project since the joint venture deal was signed 9 years ago.

He said Hopewell also violated a provision in the joint-venture deal saying that the entry of any new partner would have to be concurred in by both parties.

"When they got the Malaysians, there was no concurrence from the PNCC board," he explained.

Bañares noted that an Aug. 13, 2004, PNCC board resolution noted that the agency's board of directors "resolved that its existing joint-venture partner has presented the necessary and sufficient documents to prove its financial capability, as well as its debt-sourcing capacity to undertake the rehabilitation and extension of the SLEX."

A Sept. 13, 2004, letter by Ramos to President Arroyo noted that "the PNCC board favorable endorsed the PNCC-HCII joint venture agreement as still the best option."

Bañares said his company even furnished PNCC with the latest financial results of MTD Capital, which said that the Malaysian firm had $400 million in capital and $520 million in assets.

The private consortium could not start the project without the PNCC's go-ahead, which, according to Bañares, he had been trying to secure since the latter part of 2004.

As for the "color" of Hopewell Crown's money, its president said no investment nor credit would be clinched until the government had signed a Supplemental Toll Operation Agreement.

"The STOA is a requirement of investors and creditors. And it is very clear in our joint-venture agreement with PNCC, that the funding of both equity and debt would only come in after the STOA is signed," he explained.

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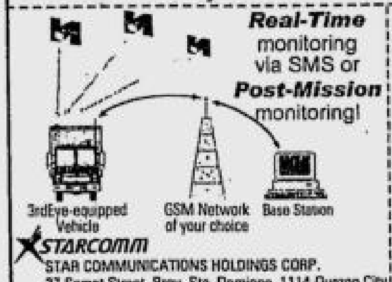

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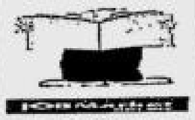

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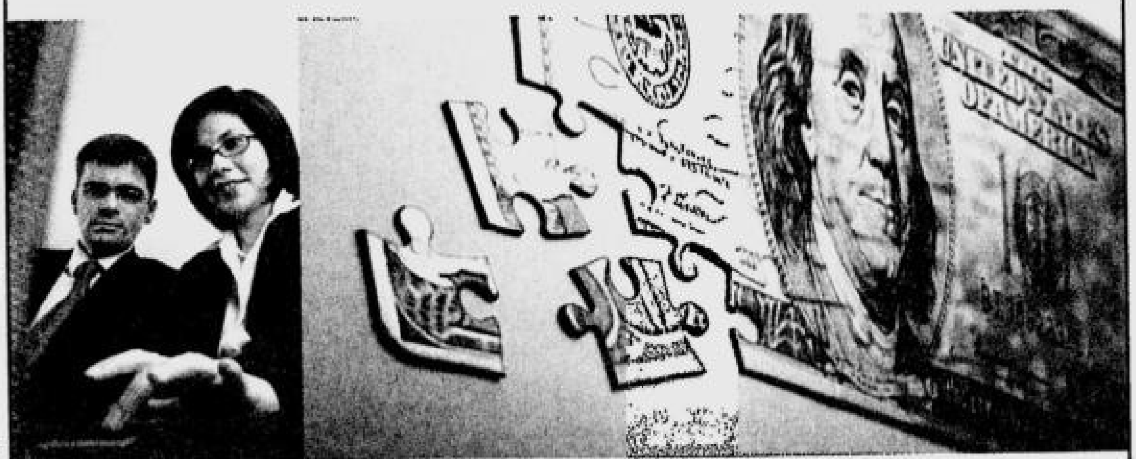

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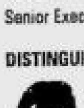

Prof. Grace Ugut, Ph.D. is the Associate Dean of the AIM Executive Education and Lifelong Learning Center. Her fields of expertise include the following areas in banking and finance: treasury management, risk management, corporate finance, and fixed income securities. She holds a doctorate degree in International Finance from Vienna University in Austria.

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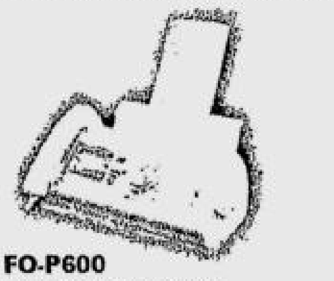

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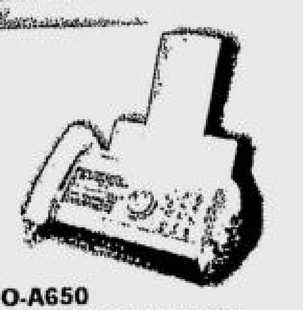

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Gov't urged to reform tax base

By Michelle V. Remo

THE NATIONAL Economic and Development Authority said the government should restructure its tax base in such a way that the profitable sectors are sufficiently taxed to better help the administration resolve its fiscal woes.

Neda Director General Romulo Neri echoed the statement of former Finance Secretary Juanita Amatong of the need to capture more sectors in the tax net, and to collect more from lucrative businesses, so that government revenues would grow just as fast as the economy.

In a forum on the Philippines' fiscal situation, Amatong said the reason why government revenues have not improved much despite growth in the economy was because the agriculture sector and export-oriented firms, which account for a bulk of the economic growth, are tax-exempt.

While gross domestic product has grown—6.1 percent last year—revenue collection has been stuck at 12.5 percent of GDP over the last few years. The 12.5 revenue-to-GDP ratio has worsened from the 17 percent recorded in 1997.

Neri cited a study by the International Monetary Fund showing that the government is not sufficiently taxing profitable sectors of society, and burdening those that earn less.

He cited the telecommunications sector, independent power producers and oil firms, which are profitable and therefore could contribute more to the government's revenue-raising efforts.

Neri said the proposals to expand the coverage of the value-added tax and to increase its rate from 10 to 12 percent were good measures to allow the government to collect more from these sectors.

The earlier proposals to impose franchise tax on telecommunication firms and on text messaging could have been helpful to government's strained revenues, he added.

"But what we have on the table now is the 2-percent increase in VAT," he said during an interview. "If we get this one passed, it could be enough."

Government officials said the preference for VAT hike and lifting of VAT exemptions over other proposals was the fact that it is a tax on consumption. This means, the more one purchases a product or avails of a service, then the more the consumer has to pay. Therefore, the more consumers avail of the service of telecommunication firms, the more the government may collect VAT from the services these firms provide.

Neri supports the proposal to impose VAT on petroleum products, whose exemption is proposed to be lifted by the finance department. He said the government has been left behind by other countries in terms of generating revenues from oil.

Deal on merger . . .

From page B1

ready agreed to cede control of their ATMs to the network consortium. This means that the banks will soon turn over management and control of ATMs to the network.

He said International Exchange Bank had already started such an outsourcing scheme and three more banks were set to follow suit.

Under this scheme, the banks will let go of control and management of ATMs to the consortium. As such, the consortium can rationalize the location of the ATMs to ensure a wider coverage.

"At present, when you go to a mall you see a lot of ATMs, even from the same consortium, and probably you don't need that many. But in other cases, there are areas where you can't find any," De Mesa said.

A merger of at least two of the ATM networks, he said, would be enough to start the ball rolling.

The BSP, for its part, is set to slap tighter disclosure regulations on banks' ATM charges in view of widespread customer complaints.

Until the three-way merger of the ATM networks happens, the BSP said the least it could do was to force banks to be more transparent in their ATM fees and charges.

While banks do not charge the use of ATMs by their own account holders, they slap varying fees when their machines are used by depositors of other banks. While there is interconnection between some of the ATM networks, the charge goes even higher when another network is used.

Money cure

BREAKTIME

Conrado R . Banal III

JUSTO, we have a problem. This cute administration does not know what to do. Should it impose VAT on electricity? Or should it just visit squatter areas for photo-ops?

Not that this cute administration knows what to do regarding other problems, such as too much graft and corruption, and widespread smuggling.

This cute administration appointed somebody to the Bureau of Customs who has a bonded warehousing business.

As everybody knows, bonded warehouses are notorious as fronts for smuggling. It's like asking Bong Pineda or Tony Santos to become anti-gambling czars.

* * *

NOW, if we make one wrong move in power generation, such as the VAT, the solution may just worsen the problem, which may even lead us to ruin.

You see, this cute administration is telling us that the VAT measure pending in Congress is the bitter pill we have to swallow to cure our fiscal sickness.

It is even launching a spin for the VAT. A political hanger-on, for instance, used the name of the Rotary Club in newspaper ads to support VAT—and Gloriaetta.

Naturally, he did so without the Rotary Club's permission, and then he went on to blame the PR group that put out the lying ads.

* * *

LIKE all medicine, however, the bitter pill called more tax also has some side effects. You cure the headache, sure, but then you also develop a third arm.

One of the proposals in Congress calls for the imposition of VAT on power generation, whether the current 10 percent or the prospective 12 percent.

The Department of Finance estimates that the measure alone can raise some P15 billion a year.

That's a lot of money, sure, because down here in my barangay, we have no idea what that kind of money can do. I just know I, for one, can also use P15 billion.

* * *

BUT anyway the thing is, applying VAT on power generation is going to be bad—very, very bad—for the sale of the government's biggest money problem called Napocor.

Why do we need to sell Napocor? Well, for one, the sale means instant cash to this financially challenged cute administration.

Easily, the assets of Napocor can fetch from P150 to P250 billion. CASH!

And then, if the government gets rid of Napocor, its deficit immediately drops by P70 billion a year at least.

As a bonus, since the Napocor plants are owned by private business, the government earns income tax from them, estimated at P4 to P6 billion a year.

We can probably say goodbye to all those if we insist on imposing VAT on power generation—a case of the tax cure being worse than the money ailment.

* * *

IN the first place, Napocor is one of the reasons why this cute administration is asking us to swallow the bitter pill. Napocor is the biggest contributor to the fiscal crisis.

It accounts for about one-third of the entire yearly public sector deficit.

Sure, the losses of Napocor are not reflected in the budget. It's just that, since the losses run up to hundreds of billions of pesos every year, the taxpayers will still have to take care of the same losses.

That's why this cute administration is trying to get rid of Napocor, by selling it piece by piece to any taker. I'm afraid the VAT on power will not help in that.

* * *

FOR starters, the VAT will create a legal minefield. The investors in power generation came in years ago, precisely because the government promised them tax breaks.

In effect, by imposing VAT on them, the government is simply breaking its promise which, of course, is nothing new to us down here.

But in business, that's tantamount to the government changing rules in the middle of the ballgame. This invites court suits. These are always bad for investments.

In other words, it becomes difficult to sell those Napocor assets. Not even all the jueteng income of a Bong or a Tony can cover for those assets.

* * *

HAPPILY for us, another power crisis—you know, the world famous "brownouts"—is just around the corner.

We are going to have one by 2008.

How do we address the crisis if nobody is going to invest in the sector anymore just because the government says one thing and then it does another?

And then the vicious cycle goes on. We will be forced to accept high prices to hurry up new power plants. Power rates will then go up.

Remember, despite the boast of this cute administration that it already cut our power rates, we still have the highest rates in Southeast Asia.

One reason was the power crisis that came about during the time of Tita Cory. Another was the monopoly called Napocor that did not exactly encourage competition.

The VAT therefore can perpetuate the reasons why we suffer higher prices of electricity. This, to me, is much worse the problem it is trying to cure.

* * *

AND as everybody also knows, high power rates make this country less competitive.

Look, because manufacturing is such a costly proposition here, a lot of local manufacturing businesses have moved out to China.

Even local brands of shoes and clothing are now made in China. Soon, even our kids will be made in China.

We have less and less locally produced goods. We have more and more imported goods. No wonder, we are becoming a nation of smugglers, *este*, traders *pala*.

No competition in the power business will worsen the trend, because we can never hope to become competitive—again—in manufacturing.

* * *

IMPOSING the VAT on electricity will be a double whammy for us. Why? Because, one, we pay for higher electricity rates, and, two, we pay for higher prices of manufacturing due to the higher electricity rates.

Raul Concepcion, who heads a consumer watch group for power, thinks that the VAT on electricity generation will affect consumers the most.

Power generation has no "input" VAT, which other business lines can deduct from their VAT payment.

And so, without the input VAT, the power generation sector will bear the full impact of the VAT. Ultimately, it becomes a pure tax on us, consumers.

To think that last September, we already saw a power rate increase of P1.15 per kilowatthour here in Luzon.

The rates will go up some more, because the authorities approved another 98 centavo per kWh increase last November.

And hear this—the VAT will add some P0.81 per kWh to the rates. *Buhay ka pa!*

* * *

IT'S been a long time coming, but the resignation of Cito Lorenzo from all his government positions was not all that unexpected.

Cito resigned as chair of Land Bank and Quedancor. Well, by law, those positions require the agriculture secretary and the trade secretary, respectively.

Anyway, Cito got those positions after Gloriaetta replaced him at the agriculture department—you know, much like consuelo de bobo.

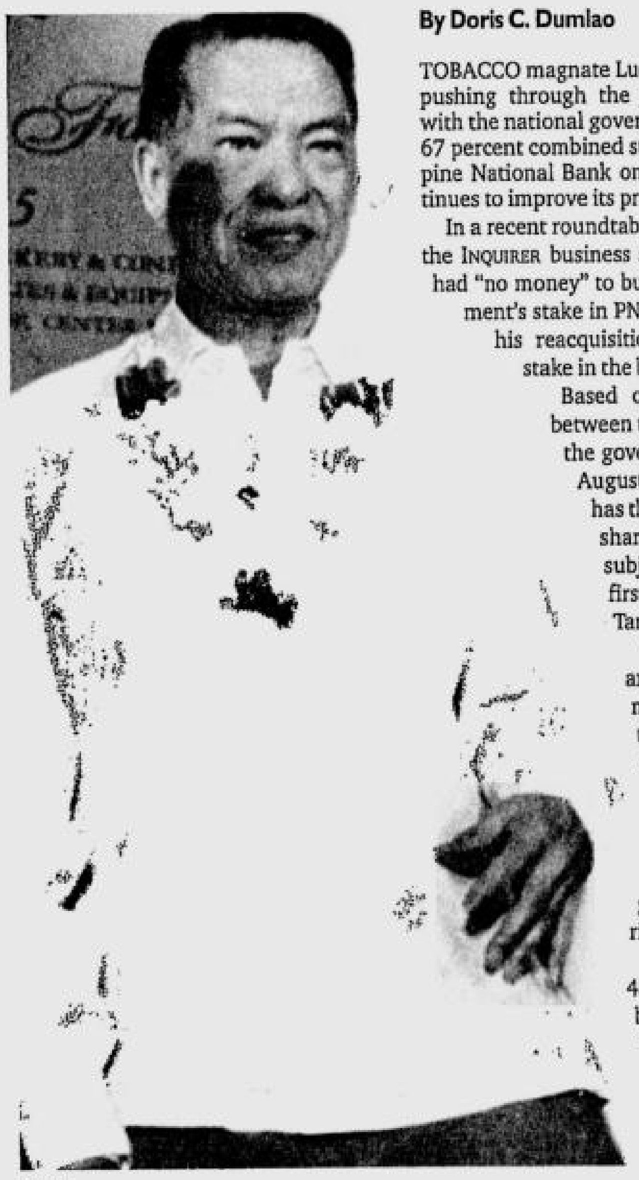
As I have been saying in this column for some time, Cito did well in his job as agriculture secretary. In his time, farm production has hit record highs. He introduced the high breed rice and corn. We never had any shortage of any food item, right?

And that's how this cute administration rewarded his effort—by demoting him?

Still, in whatever position, his resignation is a loss to the government. But then again it is a gain to us. I am sure Cito will continue his work to make our lives better, particularly in the countryside.

I happen to know it has been his lifetime dream to see a better Philippines.

Tobacco magnate keen on selling stake in PNB



TAN

By Doris C. Dumlao

TOBACCO magnate Lucio Tan is keen on pushing through the joint sale, along with the national government, of at least 67 percent combined stake in the Philippine National Bank once the bank continues to improve its profitability.

In a recent roundtable discussion with the INQUIRER business staff, Tan said he had "no money" to buy out the government's stake in PNB, thus ruling out his reacquisition of controlling stake in the bank.

Based on an agreement between the Tan group and the government signed in August 2002, the state has the option to sell its shares to a third party subject to a right of first offer by the Lucio Tan group.

The government and Tan's group may likewise agree to a joint sale as will allow both parties to offer at least 67 percent equity ownership, with Tan's group having a right of first offer.

The bank is now 45-percent owned by the government. Tan also controls 45 percent of PNB.

When the government extended a P25-billion loan package to PNB in 2002, a third was converted into equity thus raising its stake from 16 to 45 percent.

Another third was used to settle the debts of government-owned and-controlled corporations. The remaining third was restructured into a 10-year loan.

Despite the sharp improvements in PNB's profitability over the past two years—three years ahead of its target under the bank's 10-year rehabilitation plan—Tan is no longer interested in getting back a dominant stake in the bank.

Instead, he indicated that a joint sale was the more likely scenario.

However, he said PNB would need to chalk up more profits to be attractive to new investors.

While the bank had turned around the corner, he said profits were still not good enough.

"More profits, develop markets," replied Tan when asked about his vision for the bank.

PNB, once the country's biggest bank, attained a second straight year of profitability in 2004, with net profits more than doubling to P353 million from P168 million a year ago.

PNB officials earlier said when the bank started posting P2 to P3 billion in net profits, that would be the time that the government might want to unload its stake in the bank.

The taipan also said he was not in a hurry to expand his other banking interest, Allied Banking Corp.

"We are after the return not the size," Tan said. "Quality is better than quantity."

Masinloc plant sale backed

ENERGY Secretary Vincent Perez Jr. yesterday welcomed the support given by Senate President Franklin Drilon for the sale of a National Power Corp. (Napocor) plant in Masinloc, Zambales, to a Filipino-Australian consortium which won an earlier bidding for the said plant.

Perez said Drilon's "unequivocal support for the transaction was an important boost to the country's bid for speedy and meaningful reforms in the power sector."

"With the Senate President's support behind us, we can now proceed with the sale of the Masinloc power plant and avert damage to the country's reputation in the international community," Perez added.

Drilon earlier issued a statement warning that "any unjustified delay in the sale of the Masinloc plant will cause more harm than good as it would put in question the credibility of the government's privatization program."

Drilon said he was "satisfied with the assurance of incoming Energy Secretary Rafael Lotilla that the sale of the plant went through a transparent and competitive bidding process."

Lotilla earlier said "the interest of the people and the government in the transaction was amply protected." Lotilla heads the Power Sector Asset and Liabilities Management Corp. (PSALM), which oversees the privatization of NPC assets.

Drilon noted that all bidders for the Masinloc plant were required to post a bid security in the amount of $9 million. The bidding was won by YNN Corp.

Lotilla said the $561-million bid of YNN for the plant "is a good one." The proceeds of the sale are expected to help recover some $532.4 million in debt incurred by Napocor for the construction of the plant.

DTI investigates increases in price of cement

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE DEPARTMENT of Trade and Industry is looking into the recent increases in the prices of cement.

A 40-kilo bag of cement now costs P157 or 4 percent higher than the average price in December of P151 per bag.

The department is investigating whether the price hike is justified.

Trade Secretary Juan B. Santos said certain factors, including the rising cost of electricity, could justify the increases in the prices of cement. He said electricity accounted for 80 percent of the variable cost of producing cement.

The cement industry is power-intensive and that it uses big amounts of coal and bunker fuel to run dedicated power plants, expenses for which are eventually passed on to consumers, according to Santos.

At the same time, the department is awaiting a decision of the Tariff Commission on whether to reimpose a safeguard duty on imported cement.

The Cement Manufacturers Association of the Philippines (Cemap) filed a petition for such after a protective duty of P15.60 per bag was lifted last Dec. 9 after three years of implementation.

A safeguard measure is imposed when low-priced imports of certain products threatens local businesses that make the same products.

The DTI said that so far, there had been no importation of cement since the safeguard duty was lifted.

But in a separate statement, Cemap said low-cost imports were still coming in and that the safeguard measure was still needed.

Cemap is asking for the continued implementation of the safeguard measure up to 2008, saying lowered tariffs as a result of the lifting would mean an influx of imports.

Cemap president Felix Enrico R. Alfiler said the power rates in Luzon were expected to rise 34 percent following the Energy Regulatory Commission's grant of a provisional authority for the National Power Corp. to hike rates by P1.23 per kilowatt-hour.

ERC officials have said power users were expected to feel the impact of higher power costs starting last month.

Alfiler said this was on top of Manila Electric Co.'s distribution rate increase of 17 centavos per kWh.

He said more increases were expected as the National Transmission Corp. is requesting for an increase of 50 centavos per kWh in transmission rates.

"Industries in the south are not spared, where increases of 22 centavos per kWh in the Visayas and 27 centavos per kWh in Mindanao have been authorized," Alfiler said.

China to set up $6-B stock stabilizing fund

SHANGHAI—China will create a $6-billion stabilization fund by June in its boldest move so far this year to support moribund markets, state media and analysts yesterday said.

But according to the analysts, a lack of detail could keep investors sidelined.

Regulators, scrambling for ways to shore up China's markets, Asia's worst-performing in 2004, will model their fund on Taiwan's National Stabilization Fund, using government money for the first time to intervene in times of volatility, analysts said.

They reckoned Beijing could amass about 50 billion yuan ($6 billion) by the end of the first half of this year.

The benchmark Shanghai composite index had gained 1.6 percent by the lunch break as investors cheered the move.

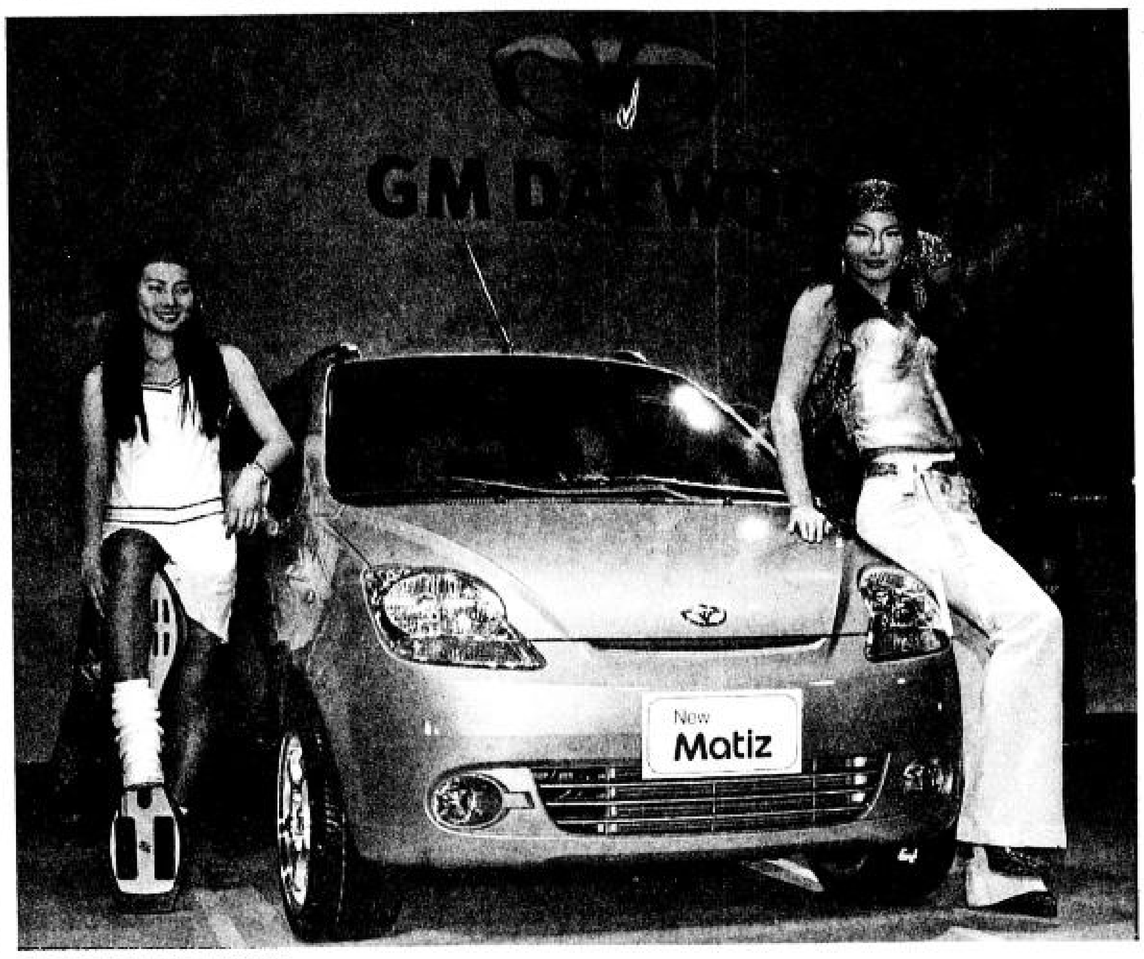
"Investors want more details so gains were capped today," said Lu Wei, a trader at East Asia Securities. "But once the fund is established, it will be seriously positive news for the market."

Beijing has taken steps to boost slumping markets after the index fell 15 percent in 2004, hit by economic cooling steps, corporate scandals and a raft of new share issues.

But with $1.5 trillion in savings and few investment choices, Chinese have piled into stocks, pushing valuations to 25 times earnings on average and making stocks nearly twice as expensive as in Hong Kong. Only a third of the market is traded.

The stabilization fund, already cleared by China's cabinet, will probably be set up in the first half of the year. *Reuters*

S. Korea leads Asia stocks to 7-year high



AS SMALL AS IT GETS
South Korean models pose beside the new GM Daewoo Matiz mini during its unveiling in Seoul. GM Daewoo launched an all-new version of the Matiz mini-car, with its 800-cc engine and a price range from 5.88 million won ($5,745) to 7.21 million won ($7,045) on the South Korean market. AFP

SINGAPORE—South Korean stocks hit a five-year high on Monday, driving Asian shares excluding Japan to a seven-year peak, after a fund invested $975 million in Korean conglomerate LG Corp. and its phone and appliance unit, LG Electronics Inc.

Japanese drug makers rose on reports that Sankyo Co. and Daiichi Pharmaceutical Co. plan to merge, offsetting falls in technology stocks to leave the Nikkei average flat.

The yen held steady near a 1-1/2-month low against the euro, put under pressure by data last week that showed Japan was in a recession for much of 2004.

South Korea's stock index rose 0.5 percent to a five-year closing high after Monaco-based Sovereign Asset Management said two of its units had bought stakes in LG Electronics Inc. and LG Corp.—both part of South Korea's second-largest conglomerate. LG Electronics climbed 7 percent and LG Corp. jumped 14.9 percent.

Sovereign, the second-biggest shareholder in top South Korean oil refiner SK Corp., said it had no intention of trying to change the management at LG Group, the nation's number two conglomerate, but some analysts were not convinced.

MSCI's index of Asia Pacific shares outside Japan edged up 0.2 percent to its highest in seven years, though most regional stock markets were trapped in narrow ranges.

The Nikkei stock index closed 0.08 percent lower at 11,651.02 as losses in tech issues offset a 4.7-percent rise in Daiichi and a 4.9-percent jump by Sankyo.

"We have way too many drug companies in Japan and they all have a burden from massive development costs ... so a merger is surely a good way to bolster their competitiveness as they can share such costs," said Yasuo Ueki, a market analyst at consultancy Poko Financial Office. "Now investors are betting that similar moves will follow among other drug makers."

Some tech shares fell amid losses in their US peers and worries over the impact of high oil prices on corporate profits.

Taiwan shares rose 0.5 percent as investors shrugged off losses in US tech issues to push Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co. up 0.9 percent.

Hong Kong shares were flat as investors awaited the city's first auction of commercial land in three years on Tuesday.

Singapore shares fell 0.3 percent.

Japanese government bond prices fell, reacting to a spate of selling in US Treasuries due to inflation worries.

The yield on the benchmark 10-year cash bond rose 3.5 basis points to 1.450 percent in early trade. *Reuters*

US gas prices dip but rise seen soon, says survey

NEW YORK—US average retail gasoline prices fell slightly over the last two weeks on ample supply, but as peak driving season approaches and crude oil prices gain, pump prices are expected to rise, according to an industry analyst.

The national average for self-serve regular unleaded gas was $1.9047 a gallon on Feb. 18, down about 0.52 cents per gallon from Feb. 4, according to the nationwide Lundberg survey of about 6,000 gas stations.

"This very slight decline [in gas prices] does not portend continued drops unless crude oil prices fall significantly," survey editor Trilby Lundberg said.

"It's more likely that gasoline prices will, sometime soon, resume rising to catch up with crude oil."

US crude oil futures ended nearly $1 higher in a shortened session on Friday amid short-covering before the three-day holiday weekend.

"If crude oil prices don't drop, it's likely we'll see pump prices rise," Lundberg said.

She also said gas prices will probably climb as the peak driving summer months get closer.

The price of gas has risen almost 18 cents from a year ago, according to the survey released on Sunday.

On Feb. 27, 2004, self-serve regular gas averaged $1.7256 per gallon.

At $2.32 per gallon, Honolulu saw the highest average price for self-serve regular unleaded gas.

Cheyenne, Wyoming saw the lowest price—$1.75 per gallon. *Reuters*

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Prudentialife-GK Village blessing today

PRUDENTIALIFE president Jose Alberto T. Alba and Prudentialife officers and employees join 48 families as beneficiaries of the company's Gift Of Life Drive (Gold) project, the Prudentialife-Gawad Kalinga (GK) Village in Baseco, Tondo, Manila today.

During the awarding of the keys to the beneficiaries last December, Prudentialife and Gawad Kalinga formally welcomed the families to their new and better homes at the Prudentialife-GK Village. "The building of houses is just the beginning and hopefully through livelihood programs and scholarship projects we would be able to uplift their lives," Alba said.

The housing project is an initiative not only of the management but also the employees. "I'm surprised and touched because the initiative did not come from us. We do initiate some projects but you could see the employees themselves initiate their own projects to help other people," he said.

Grateful awardees. Dicelio Candano, a Baseco resident and now a GK volunteer whose home was among those gutted by the fire, said that Prudentialife and GK gave him a reason to believe in miracles again. "Nagpapasalamat ako sa Prudentialife na pumunta sa Baseco para mabigyan kami ng bahay," he said.

Margie Auntentico, also a Baseco resident and GK volunteer expressed her sincerest gratitude to Prudentialife. "Masayang-masaya, 'yung 'di ma-express 'yung tuwa kasi sa short span of time na mula nung masunog ito, 'di namin in-e-expect na 'di pa aabutin ng isang taon makakapagpatayo kaagad ng bahay," she said.

Another GK volunteer, Ernesto Pardines said that his new home was the best Christmas gift he received in his lifetime. "Itong bagay ay napaka-importante talaga. Talagang hindi namin makakalimutan," he added.

Prudentialife-GK Village. The vision of Prudentialife in turning slums and shanties into shelters of love and the good life by building 48 houses in Baseco has come true. The realization of that vision began when Prudentialife and Gawad Kalinga laid the foundation for the Prudentialife-GK Village in a ground breaking ceremony held last October. Prudentialife chair Amb. Francisco A. Alba acknowledged Gawad Kalinga and Prudentialife employees for making the Prudentialife Village possible. "They say the journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step and this is the first step to build better communities, thanks to Gawad Kalinga and Prudentialifers."

Gawad Kalinga executive director Antonio Meloto said that the dream of the poor Filipinos is now happening because of companies like Prudentialife. "We can see that the poor become productive if you give them dignity." Prudentialife is committed to continue to lend a hand aside from the actual building of houses. The company hopes to help in some other ways like providing education to the children of Gawad Kalinga.

Prudentialife

Jollibee holds a StarStruck bash

JOLLIBEE, the number one fast food chain in the country, recently held a special bash for television's number one artista talent search, GMA-7's StarStruck.

Held at the Jollibee Bluewave store along Diosdado Macapagal Highway, the 14 StarStruck idols danced and charmed their way to an audience composed of Jollibee executives, employees, and partner agencies, as well as network executives of GMA-7.

Last October, Jollibee launched the Bee StarStruck Promo, a text based contest that allows viewers to vote for their favorite StarStruck finalist. Every purchase of P100 worth of Jollibee food products entitles a customer to 50 points which they can use to vote for their favorite StarStruck survivor. The StarStruck survivor with the most number of votes will be awarded with a Jollibee talent contract and star in a Langhap-Sarap TV commercial.

Inez Reyes, Jollibee vice president for marketing, welcomed the StarStruck teens and acknowledged them for their talent and determination to achieve their dreams at such a young age. "Jollibee believes in the abilities of the Filipino youth and we are ready to support them in their endeavors, just like the StarStruck finalists who have become an inspiration to others," she said.

Manuel P. Quiogue, GMA-7 president and COO thanked the popular fast food chain for their partnership with the Kapuso network, especially on their tremendous support for StarStruck, now on its second season. "We are privileged that you have chosen us to be not just your media arm, but as your business partner," Quiogue remarked.

JOLLIBEE and GMA-7 partners for StarStruck. Shown are (from left): Malou Vasallo, Universal Mccann VP for media; Leah Nuyda, VP for entertainment TV sales; Yiu Cortez, GMA sales director for entertainment TV sales; Inez Reyes, Jollibee VP for marketing; Manuel Quiogue, GMA president and COO; Tommy King, Jollibee VP of RBU South Luzon; Venus Navalta, Universal Mccann managing director; and Lot Legaspi, Jollibee marketing manager.

Special seminar on 'Understanding the Medical Transcription Outsourcing Business'

THE GROWTH within the medical transcription business is at an all time high. Learn more from the country's most outstanding medical transcription education provider and be ahead in the billion dollar industry during a special seminar on "Understanding the Medical Transcription Outsourcing Business" on Feb. 24 to 26, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the MTC Academy, Ground Floor, Urban Building, 405 Sen. Gil Puyat Ave., Bel-Air, Makati City.

MTC Academy, in response to numerous queries, brings back this special seminar for medical transcription. This seminar has been designed for entrepreneurs and professionals (both medical and non-medical) who are venturing into the medical transcription outsourcing business. Topics to be discussed include the global outlook on medical transcription, market assessment, the challenges of running a medical transcription business, financial management for local MT production, technology, HR requirements and other related topics essential in leading a successful medical transcription business.

The ITO Group of Companies, the holding company of MTC Academy, is also the leader in medical transcription training and development with 11 medical transcription training locations nationwide as well as the leading manufacturer of medical transcription production equipment.

Medical transcription means converting into written form the dictation by the physician and other healthcare professionals regarding patient assessment, workup, therapeutic procedures, clinical course, and diagnosis in order to document patient care and facilitate healthcare services. A medical transcriptionist is a medical language specialist who transcribes the recorded medical audio file into electronic data.

As an industry, medical transcription offers an incredible potential since its market size is estimated at 10 to 23 billion dollars and is still growing at annual rate of 10 percent to 13 percent. The availability of medical transcriptionists is decreasing at 7 to 8 percent per annum. They are very much in demand in the US, UK, Canada, Australia, Middle East and in the Philippines. Globally, 49,000 to 150,000 additional MTs are needed per year. Medical transcription has become a priority area in the information and communication technology (ICT) development in the Philippines as it is a dollar-earning industry.

One main attraction of the MT business in the Philippines is its ability to retain a growing population of migrants to remain in the country and still earn in dollars. Doctors, nurses, physical therapists, medical technologists and allied medical practitioners need not leave the country to earn more to improve quality of life and standard of living.

Furthermore, what makes the business even more stable opportunity is the enactment and enforcement of the Healthcare Insurance Portability and Accountability Act. This law requires the presence of medical transcriptionists in the workplaces relating to health and medical services.

For details, please contact 890-7319/72, 896-9973/78 or log in at www.mtcacademy.com or email at admin@mtcacademy.com.

Happenings at Suburbia

SUBURBIA Bar presents True Faith tonight performing alternately with Escape. Zyncxation with K24/7 band and Livewire are slated on Feb. 23. Nina's brother King with Rush band teams up with Toy Symphony on Feb. 24. Nyoy volante & Mannos entertains you with Freeverse band performing back to back on Feb. 25. Wiseguys with Toy Symphony, and Paolo Santos perform on Feb 26. Visit the Suburbia Bar (tel. no. 450-1685 to 86) in Adriatico St., Malate. It is open nightly with a minimum charge of P300 (with two standard drinks).

CGP NCR champs

OB MONTESSORI and St. Scholastica's College Manila bagged the regional titles of the Culinary Grand Prix (CGP) National Capital Region Elimination Round for a chance to represent the Metro Area in the National Finals slated today at the Philippine Trade and Training Center. CGP is a culinary trade competition designed to encourage foodservice entrepreneurship among college and culinary students nationwide. This advocacy program of Unilever Foodsolutions, the foodservice arm of Unilever Foods Phils (CMC) Inc, enters its 6th year.

NKTI launches Philippine Transplant Database

CELEBRATING its 22nd year, the National Kidney and Transplant Institute with the help of Roche Phils, launches the Philippine Transplant Database on Feb. 23. The transplant database will contain pertinent information on both recipients and donors in the Philippines. Coinciding with the Institute's anniversary, Unit 5 which was affected by the May 1998 Lung Center burning, was restored and renamed as Unit 2E which will be blessed and opened with 31 beds. Now the Institute has a total capacity of 266 beds. For additional inquiries on the Philippine Transplant Database, contact Renal Disease Control Program (Redcop) at 927-7314; 925-3678; 925-3679 and Human Organ Preservation Effort (Hope) at 924-4673.

AIJC presents 'Managing Political Campaigns' seminar

THE ASIAN Institute of Journalism and Communication (AIJC) is organizing and facilitating a seminar on Managing Political Campaigns. It will be held from Feb. 23 to 25 at AIJC. The seminar is an ideal course for political parties to modernize traditional campaign methods and activities. It is a seminar catered to young communication professionals as well, who want to embark on a career on political campaigns. Interested parties or individuals who would want to attend this seminar may get in touch with AIJC at 727-6799; telefax 725-4228; email aijcmla@info.com.ph.

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RICOH RECEIVES ISO14001:2004 CERTIFICATION

Ricoh (Philippines) Inc successfully achieved its ISO14001:2004 Certification, having met the highest standards at environmental protection in the Philippines copier industry. Ricoh is widely recognized both as a worldwide industry leader and a company that is very much attuned and concern on the environmental conservation. Receiving the ISO Certification from Certech, the certifying body for ISO14001:2004 are Ricoh (Phils) Inc top management (from left): Sally D. Panganiban, HR manager; Orly S. Closa, environmental management representative; Elisa S. Ysmael, chief finance officer; Manuel S. Peralta, president and CEO; and Augusto D. Cruz, sales and marketing division manager.

MAIL AND MORE OPENS IN VIRAC, CATANDUANES

Mail and More, the Authorized ShipCenter of FedEx and Air21 recently opened its newest Global Business Center at San Jose St., Virac, Catanduanes. Shown cutting the ribbon are (from left): Vice Mayor Dr. Santos Zafe; Concepcion M. Del Rosario (president of Mail and More Business Services Inc); engineer Zenia V. Camba (area business partner for Virac, Catanduanes) and Ed Barrios (Area Business Partner for Sorsogon City). Mail and More, your one-stop business center has more than 180 branches nationwide offering complete courier and postal services. For franchising inquiries call 793-2140/793-2175 or visit www.mailandmore.com.ph.

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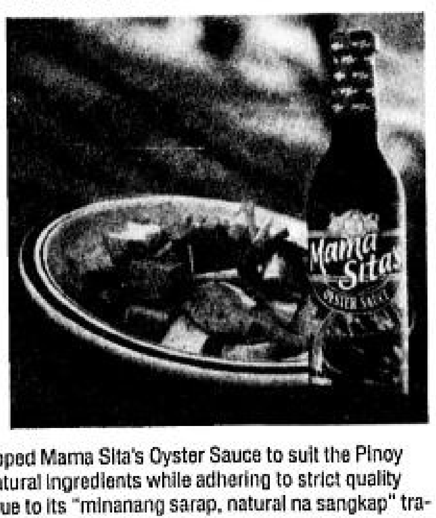
Product FILES

Mama Sita's Oyster Sauce adds zest to fried tofu



FOR less than P30 (or P5.82 per serving), a family of five can enjoy a nutritious and delicious meal like fried tofu with spring onion and oyster sauce. As a protein substitute to meat, the dish is made more palatable by Mama Sita's Oyster Sauce with its rich dark brown sauce made from real oysters blended with soy protein, caramel, spices and brine. Marigold Commodities painstakingly developed Mama Sita's Oyster Sauce to suit the Pinoy taste buds using only natural ingredients while adhering to strict quality and safety standards. True to its "minanang sarap, natural na sangkap" tradition, Mama Sita's Oyster Sauce provides a new twist to ordinary native dishes without overpowering their natural flavor. And in an effort to make it affordable to the average Filipino family, Mama Sita's Oyster Sauce is now available in 5 oz size at only P28 per bottle. As an essential ingredient in traditional Chinese cooking, Mama Sita's Oyster Sauce enhances the taste and appearance of most stir-fried dishes and is a healthy and more flavorful substitute to MSG. For more information about Mama Sita's mixes and sauces, visit its website at www.msita.com or write to info@msita.com.

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Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas

DISPOSAL COMMITTEE
NOTICE OF PUBLIC AUCTION

Notice is hereby given that the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas will sell **VARIOUS SCRAP MATERIALS** located at the BSP Main Complex, A. Mabini cor. P. Ocampo Sr. Sts, Malate, Manila and at the Philippine International Convention Center, CCP Complex, Roxas Boulevard, Pasay City thru sealed bids to be received by the Committee not later than **10:00 A.M.** on **4 March 2005** at Room MR-2C, 2nd Floor, 5-Storey Building, BSP Main Complex, A. Mabini cor. P. Ocampo Sr. Streets, Malate, Manila.

Forms and further information may be obtained from the Committee's Executive Officer c/o Ms. Crisanta F. Reyes, Administrative Services Department, Room 110, Ground Floor, 5-Storey Building, A. Mabini cor. P. Ocampo Sr. Streets, Malate, Manila, Telephone No. 525-87-86

(Sgd.) **MELPIN A. GONZAGA**
Chairman

(PDI--Feb. 22, 2005)

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National Power Corporation
INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID
NPC-PSD-2005-04

The Bids and Awards Committee (BAC)-PSD of NPC invites interested bidders to apply for eligibility and to bid for the following requirements:

SCHEDULE	ITEM/DESCRIPTION	PR NUMBER	APPROVED BUDGET FOR THE CONTRACT
DATE OF BIDDING: MARCH 21, 2005; 9:00 AM			
4A1	VARIOUS LAMPS, BULBS & BALLAST, ETC. FOR LIGHTING MAINTENANCE AT NPC-OBC	OPRS-05-007 (EA)	P 1,137,200.00
DATE OF BIDDING: MARCH 21, 2005; 2:00 PM			
4B1	VARIABLE SPEED GEAR, TYPE: FKNRHB43 W/ ELECTRIC ACTUATOR, BESTA	2BCF-04-806 (NY)	P 5,354,400.00
4B2	J.O.-SUPPLY, INSTALLATION, TESTING & COMMISSIONING OF TWO (2) UNITS AIR COMPRESSORS ASSEMBLY	2BCF-04-911 (NY)	P 12,915,000.00
DATE OF BIDDING: MARCH 22, 2005; 9:00 AM			
4C1	PARTS FOR PIELSTICK 16 PC2.5 V 400 DIESEL ENGINE, MFR: SEMT PIELSTICK	5PDP-05-006 (NY)	P 6,158,143.61

NOTE: A Pre-Bidding Conference will be held at the Bidding Room for the following bidding schedules on:

4A1	March 7, 2005; 9:00 AM	4C1	March 8, 2005; 9:00 AM
4B1-4B2	March 7, 2005; 2:00 PM		

Complete sets of Application form for Eligibility and Bid Documents may be obtained from the Procurement Services Division, Materials Management Dept. of NPC, Diliman, Quezon City upon payment of non-refundable fee of PHP 500.00 per schedule starting on February 24, 2005. **Issuance of eligibility and bid documents mornings only, 8:30 to 11:30 AM up to the specified time as stated in the bid schedules above. No bid documents will be issued three (3) calendar days before the date of bidding.**

Bids will be received at the assigned Bidding Room, PSD, MMD, NPC, Diliman, Quezon City on the date and time specified above after which Eligibility Requirements and Bid Proposals will be opened in the presence of attending bidders. Certificate of Registrations issued by other NPC Offices will be honored provided that the Certification is still valid. Prospective Bidders shall signify conformance to bidding terms and conditions as required and shall ensure the same through proper submission/execution in accordance with the IRR of "Republic Act 9184."

The Bidder shall furnish as part of his/her bid, a bid security in the amount equivalent to a percentage of the approved budget for the contract to be bid in the form of Cash, Manager's Check, Irrevocable Letter of Credit-One Percent (1%), Surety Bond - Two and a half percent (2.5%) penal and callable on demand with 120 days validity period from the date of opening of bids issued by a Surety or Insurance Company accredited by the Office of the Insurance Commission.

NPC reserves the right to reject any or all bids at any time prior to award of contract, waive any defects therein, and accept the offer most advantageous to the Corporation, without thereby incurring any of the following: a) liability whatsoever to offset expenses or losses the bidder may incur in the preparation of the bids and b) obligation to inform the affected bidder or bidders of the grounds for the basis of the BAC's action.

CHAIRMAN
Bids and Awards Committee
PSD-NPC

(PDI – February 22, 2005)

PAMPANGA II ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.
Guagua, Pampanga

INVITATION TO BID

Pampanga II Electric Cooperative, Inc. (PELCO II) with office address at Guagua, Pampanga is in need of conductors, distribution transformers, and electrical equipments intended for its rehabilitation and upgrading projects in compliance with R.A. 9136. Listed below are the required specifications and quantity:

PACKAGE I – CONDUCTORS

	Particulars		Quantity
1.	Service Drop #6	–	40,000 meters
2.	Duplex # 1/0	–	30,000 meters
3.	Duplex # 2/0	–	30,000 meters
4.	Aluminum Polythelene 1/0	–	15,000 meters
5.	ACSR 1/0 Bare	–	20,000 meters
6.	ACSR 2/0 Bare	–	15,000 meters
7.	ACSR 3/0 Bare	–	15,000 meters

PACKAGE II – DISTRIBUTION TRANSFORMERS

1.	**50 KVA, 7620/13.2 KV, 240 V,** Conventional Brand New Core Loss – 167 watts Winding Loss – 506 watts	–	30 units
2.	**37.5 KVA, 7620/13.2 KV, 240 V,** Conventional Brand New Core Loss – 153 watts Winding Loss – 392 watts	–	25 units
3.	**25 KVA, 7620/13.2 KV, 240 V,** Conventional Brand New Core Loss – 108 watts Winding Loss – 294 watts	–	30 units

PACKAGE III – SUBSTATION EQUIPMENTS

Particulars		Quantity
SF6 Circuit Breaker with the following specifications:		
a. Rated Voltage	:	72.5 KV
b. Rated Lighting Impulse with stand	:	325 KV
c. Frequency	:	60 Hz
d. Nominal Current	:	1,200 amperes
e. Short Circuit Breaking Current	:	31.5 KVA
f. Control Voltage	:	125 VDC
g. Mechanism	:	230 VAC – 2 units

PACKAGE IV – DISTRIBUTION LINE EQUIPMENTS

	Particulars		Quantity
1.	**Power Shunt Capacitor, 150 KVAR, 7620 V,** (13200:1.73 V) Single Phase, double bushing, outdoor use, 60 Hz, Power Capacitor	–	12 units
2.	**Power Shunt Capacitor, 100 KVAR, 7620 V,** (13200:1:73 V) Single phase, double bushing, outdoor use, 60 Hz Power capacitor	–	9 units

We are, therefore, inviting your company to participate in a sealed bid to be submitted to the PBAC Committee on February 28, 2005 Monday at 2:00 PM (1400 Hours) at PELCO II Main Office, San Roque, Guagua, Pampanga wherein your bid will be opened in your presence or that of your representative.

Request further to include in your sealed bids/proposals **the delivery date, terms of payment and availability of stock for evaluation purposes.** Bid for one or two items only is acceptable. The BID BOND is either in the form of cash or manager's check equivalent to two and a half percent (2 ½%) of the total bid price or surety bond equivalent to ten percent (10%) of the total bid price. Bid bond less than the required amount will be automatically disqualified. Bids/proposals submitted beyond the specified date and time will not be accepted.

PELCO II RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS, WAIVE ANY OF THE REQUIRED FORMALITY THEREIN AND ACCEPTS THE BIDS ONLY DEEMED MOST ADVANTAGEOUS TO THE COOPERATIVE.

(Sgd.) JANET M. QUIAZON
PBAC Chairman
Noted by:
(Sgd.) ENGR. EDGARDO R. PIAMONTE
Team Leader, NEA Management Team

(PDI – February 19 & 22, 2005)

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"In peace I shall both lie down and sleep, for you alone, Lord make me secure..."
Psalm 4:9

GLENN ARJONA ROBAS

Peacefully joined our Creator on February 20, 2005 at the age of 45.

His loving wife, **WENG**; children, **IGGY BOY, LEE-ANN** and **MARCKY**; parents **JOB & ALICE**; siblings, **AL & Dea, FERDY & Olive, ERIC (†) & Leony, JOHN & Lizel, GERRY & Nanette, DEAN & Shirley**, and **SHARON & Joel; Papa TOTO & Mama NENA**; in-laws, uncles & aunts, cousins, nephews & nieces, relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at 281 M.H. Del Pilar St. Liliw, Laguna.

Interment will be on Friday, February 25, 2005 at the Liliw Catholic Cemetery after the 2:00 p.m. Mass at the St. John the Baptist Parish, Liliw, Laguna.

Pacita Ortega Panis Formoso

November 22, 1923 – February 20, 2005

Survived by her husband **Gabby**; children **Billy** and **Chelo, Marivic** and **Al, Vince** and **Dittas, Mike** and **Cherie, Greg** and **Ivy, Stella** and **Dong**, and **Jojo**; grandchildren **Maita, Ravi, Beia, Gabriel, Rizza, Nico, Alex, Rosa, Misha, Mikha, Michael, Miguel, Joanne, Rafael** and **Carlo**; great-grandchild **Gaby**; sister **Carmen P. Jacinto**; in-laws **Nena C. Panis, Madeline C. Panis, Ting** and **Rose Formoso, Lilio** and **Becky Formoso, Mila F. Dolendo** and **Emma F. Lopez**, and other relatives. She was preceded in death by son **Mitch** and daughter **Asuncion**.

Her remains are at Don Bosco Chapels, Arnaiz Ave., Makati City. They will be interred at the family crypt at Santuario de San Antonio, Forbes Park, on Thursday, February 24, after the 9 a.m. Mass at Don Bosco.

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life."
John 3:16

ROGELIO C. ANTONIO

October 3, 1935 - February 20, 2005

He is survived by his wife **Marietta Gavino Antonio**; children **Jojo** and **Jun Leuterio, Jun** and **Ronald**; grandchildren **Renz, Ryan, Angela, Abigail** and **Raine**; brother **Benny**, sister-in-law **Nelly**; cousins, nephews and niece, grandnephews and grandnieces.

His remains lie in state at the Loyola Memorial Park Chapels, in Marikina City, and will be transferred to the Malolos Cathedral on 22 February 2005, in the afternoon.

Necrological Mass will be on 24 February 2005, at 2:00 p.m.

Interment will follow at the Malolos Cemetery.

"I am the Resurrection and the Life;
whoever believes in Me will never die."
John 11:26

In Loving Memory of

FELISA MANDIN BASTES

May 2, 1917 – February 19, 2005
From his beloved sons, daughters, in-laws and grandchildren:

Children:
- **Bishop Arturo M. Bastes, SVD**
- **Natalio del Rosario & Engr. Bonita M. Bastes**
- **Atty. Pablo M. Bastes Jr. & Carmen Valeroso**
- **Flores M. Bastes**
- **Rufino M. Bastes & Josephine Sabas**

Grandchildren:
- **Paul Gregory, James, Kristine, Lorraine, Angelo** and **Camille.**

Interment will follow after the Funeral Mass at 2:00 p.m., February 26, 2005 at St. Peter Church, Loboc, Bohol.

Domingo C. Perez

Retiree of United Laboratories, Inc.

Died in the Grace of our Lord on February 20, 2005 at the age of 61.

His body lies in state at 1086 Kanlaon St., Montevilla Subd., Bilibiran, Binangonan, Rizal.

Interment will be on February 27, 2005 at Sto. Rosario Memorial Park, Binangonan, Rizal.

We design OBITUARIES for free.

"...absent from the body to be present with the Lord." 2 Corinthians 5:8

CLASSIFIEDS

Republic of the Philippines
PHILIPPINE HEALTH INSURANCE CORPORATION
Citystate Centre, 709 Shaw Boulevard, Pasig City

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID
(Public Bidding)

The Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PHILHEALTH) wishes to invite bidders for **BLADE SERVERS and PERIPHERALS.**

Request for Proposal (RFP) can be obtained from February 20, 2005 to March 6, 2005, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at the Office of the Secretariat - Bids and Awards Committee (OSBAC), Room 1804, 18th Floor, City State Centre #709 Shaw Blvd., Brgy. Oranbo, Pasig City upon payment of a non-refundable fee of Php **5,000.00.**

The **PhilHealth** had provided funds for this project. The approved budget for this contract is Php**10,000,000.00.**

A pre-bid conference will be held on March 7, 2005 at 1:30 p.m. at the OSBAC (Rm. 1804).

The bidders shall prepare their duly accomplished eligibility requirements, technical and financial proposal in three separate sealed envelopes and drop in the respective bid boxes located at the above-mentioned address.

Submission of bids will be on March 29, 2005 on or before 12:00 noon at the OSBAC. Opening of bids will follow at 1:30 p.m. at the same venue. Any bidder who comes late will not be entertained. The official time clock shall be the wall clock located at Room 1804. Any bid submitted after the cut-off time will not be accepted.

The BAC-ITR shall determine if each prospective bidder is eligible to participate in the bidding by examining the completeness of each prospective bidder's eligibility requirements or statements against a checklist of requirements, using the **non-discretionary "pass/fail"** criteria.

To guarantee the faithful performance by the winning bidder of his/her obligations under the contract prepared in accordance with the bidding documents, he/she shall post a Bid Security in any of the following forms and amount;

Forms of Security	Minimum Amount in % of Approved Budget for the Contract to be Bid	Amount of Bid Security
Cash, certified check, cashier's check, manager's check, bank draft or irrevocable letter of credit	One percent (1%)	Php 100,000.00
Bank Guarantee	One and a half percent (1½%)	Php 150,000.00
Surety Bond	Two and a half percent (2 ½%)	Php 250,000.00
Foreign Government Guarantee	One hundred percent (100%)	Php10,000,000.00

We look forward to your participation in this worthwhile endeavor.

PhilHealth reserves the right to waive any formality on the eligibility requirements of this project. Furthermore, PhilHealth reserves the right to reject any and all proposals, or declare a failure of bidding, or not award the contract, and makes no assurance that a contract shall be entered as a result of this invitation.

(Sgd) MELINDA C. MERCADO
SVP, Health Insurance Operations Sector and
Chairperson, BAC-ITR

(PDI--Feb. 22 & 28, 2005)

Republic of the Philippines
PHILIPPINE HEALTH INSURANCE CORPORATION
Citystate Centre, 709 Shaw Boulevard, Pasig City

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID
(Public Bidding)

The Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PHILHEALTH) wishes to invite bidders for **CORPORATE SECURITY DEVICES.**

Request for Proposal (RFP) can be obtained from February 22, 2005 to March 8, 2005, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at the Office of the Secretariat - Bids and Awards Committee (OSBAC), Room 1804, 18th Floor, City State Centre #709 Shaw Blvd., Brgy. Oranbo, Pasig City upon payment of a non-refundable fee of Php **3,500.00.**

The **PhilHealth** had provided funds for this project. The approved budget for this contract is Php**7,000,000.00.**

A pre-bid conference will be held on March 9, 2005 at 1:30 p.m. at the OSBAC (Rm. 1804).

The bidders shall prepare their duly accomplished eligibility requirements, technical and financial proposal in three separate sealed envelopes and drop in the respective bid boxes located at the above-mentioned address.

Submission of bids will be on April 4, 2005 on or before 12:00 noon at the OSBAC. Opening of bids will follow at 1:30 p.m. at the same venue. Any bidder who comes late will not be entertained. The official time clock shall be the wall clock located at Room 1804. Any bid submitted after the cut-off time will not be accepted.

The BAC-ITR shall determine if each prospective bidder is eligible to participate in the bidding by examining the completeness of each prospective bidder's eligibility requirements or statements against a checklist of requirements, using the **non-discretionary "pass/fail"** criteria.

To guarantee the faithful performance by the winning bidder of his/her obligations under the contract prepared in accordance with the bidding documents, he/she shall post a Bid Security in any of the following forms and amount;

Forms of Security	Minimum Amount in % of Approved Budget for the Contract to be Bid	Amount of Bid Security
Cash, certified check, cashier's check, manager's check, bank draft or irrevocable letter of credit	One percent (1%)	Php 70,000.00
Bank Guarantee	One and a half percent (1½%)	Php 105,000.00
Surety Bond	Two and a half percent (2 ½%)	Php 175,000.00
Foreign Government Guarantee	One hundred percent (100%)	Php 7,000,000.00

We look forward to your participation in this worthwhile endeavor.

PhilHealth reserves the right to waive any formality on the eligibility requirements of this project. Furthermore, PhilHealth reserves the right to reject any and all proposals, or declare a failure of bidding, or not award the contract, and makes no assurance that a contract shall be entered as a result of this invitation.

(Sgd) MELINDA C. MERCADO
SVP, Health Insurance Operations Sector and
Chairperson, BAC-ITR

(PDI--Feb. 22 & March 6, 2005)

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NFA to evaluate retailers' records

NATIONAL Food Authority (NFA) administrator Gregorio Y. Tan, Jr. announced that the food agency will start reviewing records of its accredited rice retailers to update its rice allocation system in preparation for this year's lean months. Tan said this action will ensure efficiency in the agency's rice distribution system. Records of the NFA's 22,664 accredited rice retailers nationwide will be reviewed and assessed to effectively maintain a network of reliable partners in making government rice available, accessible and affordable to low-income consumers, especially during the traditional lean period from July to September. Of the 22,466 rice retailers, a total of 10,116 operate rice outlets inside markets and 12,548 outside markets. Other NFA rice outlets include 1,533 Bigasan ni Gloria sa Palengke, 80 Tindahan ni Pangulong Gloria in 15 hot spot areas and 189 Kalahi store outlets. "If there's a need to cancel the passbooks of some erring retailers, we will do so if it will result to a more efficient and organized rice distribution system," Tan explained. He also cited that utmost prudence will be exercised in the evaluation of the records so as not to jeopardize the delivery of the agency's services.

CCP Sining Taktakan on Philippine Literature

THE PROBLEMS of Philippine Literature will be the topic of this month's Sining Taktakan on Feb. 23, 9 a.m to 12 p.m., at the Cultural Center of the Philippines' Little Theater Lobby. Presented by the CCP Film Division in cooperation with the CCP Literature Division and sponsored by Café Puro, the event will feature cutting edge writers in media, poetry and fiction. Guest panelists will include internationally acclaimed young poet Angelo V. Suarez of the Thomasian Writer's Guild and Paolo Manalo, Literary Editor of the Free Press. Sining Taktakan is a major program of the CCP which seeks to empower students, cultural workers and the general public through forums and discussions with influential figures, scholars and leaders in the field of media and culture. Sining Taktakan deals with issues and challenges facing Pinoy film, television, radio and other media. Admission is free. For more information, please call the CCP Film Division at tel. no. 832 1125 local 1704-1705.

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LIFESTYLE

Editor Chelo Banal-Formoso

MONDAY **ARTS & BOOKS** ● TUESDAY **FITNESS** ● WEDNESDAY **2BU** ● THURSDAY **FOOD** ● FRIDAY **FASHION & BEAUTY**

Prevent lower back pain during pregnancy

WELL AND GOOD

Tina Juan

I HAD terrible back pains during my first pregnancy and none at all during my second. What was the difference? I was doing special strengthening and stretching exercises designed specifically to prevent lower back pain in pregnant women.

In those days, the exercises were part of the Jane Fonda Pregnancy Workout. Today, you can find similar exercises in the book, "Maternal Fitness" by Julie Tupler, a registered nurse and personal trainer who has taught exercise to pregnant women since 1991.

Lower back pain is so common during pregnancy because, as the abdomen enlarges and pulls forward, the lower back muscles shorten and pull backward to compensate. The weakening of the abdominal muscles as they are being stretched by the growing uterus and the compensatory tightening of the lower back can pull the spine out of alignment and send the muscles into a painful spasm.

You need to strengthen your abdominals and stretch your lower back to reverse the process. Here's how to do it the "maternal fitness" way.

Strengthen the abdominal muscles.

Your abdominal muscles have four layers. The deepest layer is the transversus abdominis (TVA). It wraps around your torso in horizontal fibers like a wide belt. This is what you will use primarily to push the baby out. It is also the muscle you use when you cough, sneeze and go to the bathroom.

By keeping it strong, you help support your spine and put less stress on your lower back muscles. Tupler says an added benefit is you will be able to recover your pre-pregnancy waistline faster.

Tupler says think of the TVA as moving out and in or forward and backward like a horizontal elevator. Think of your belly button as the engine that moves the elevator. Do this exercise while sitting on a chair or sitting cross-legged on the floor or your bed.

- Expand your TVA by inhaling and pushing your belly forward.
- Exhale slowly, and begin to move your belly button backward toward your spine.
- Your back must be supported and not move during the exercise. Keep one hand on your belly, the other on the lower back to feel the TVA moving back and forth.
- Keep pulling your belly button inward as you count aloud to 30 (in the beginning, count only to 5 or 10). Counting aloud will force you to take a breath of air in between. Do 10 repetitions a day.

This exercise isn't only for pregnant women. People who don't have time to work out can do it anywhere and anytime to strengthen their abs and back. The very simple technique is quite effective in firming up flabby abdominal muscles.

Stretch your lower back muscles

Tupler calls her lower back stretches "belly dancing" because the bottom of the pelvis is brought forward and then returned to the center making the belly appear like it is "dancing." Fitness trainers call them "pelvic tilts."

The movement relieves stress on the lower back. It prevents backaches by lengthening the lower back muscles that become shortened as the enlarging abdomen pulls them backward.

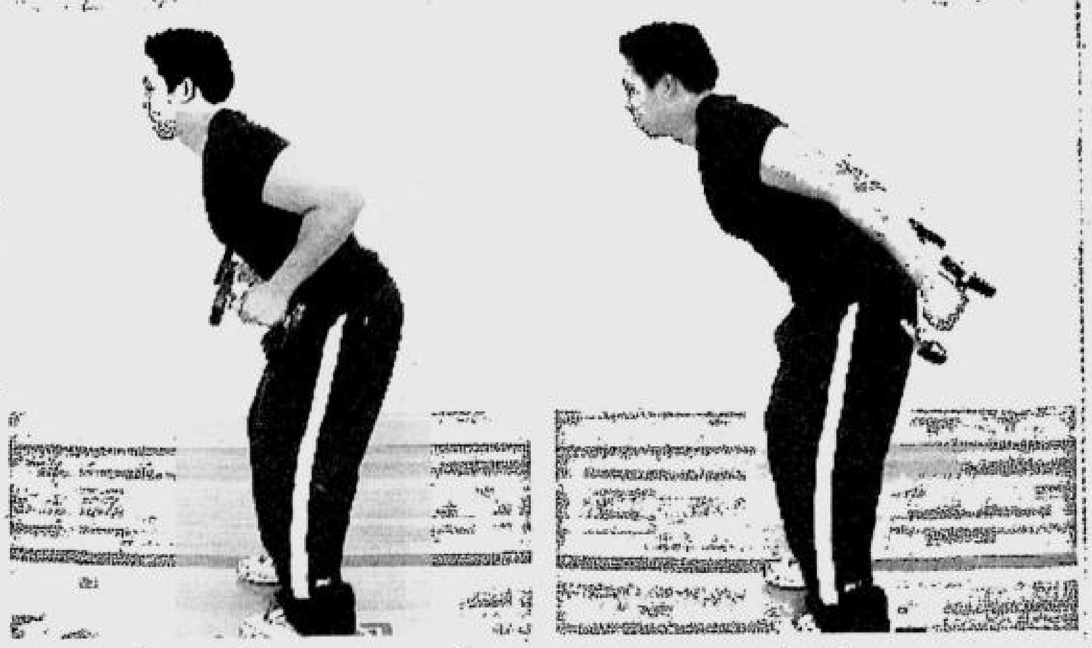
Tupler recommends three positions: standing erect, standing while leaning forward with the hands above knees, and on all fours.

The technique is the same for all three. Think of a string attached to your tailbone. "Pull" the string down toward the floor. You will feel the bottom of your pelvic bones tilt forward as your lower back flattens and the muscles lengthen. Hold this tilted position for five seconds as you keep breathing normally. Make sure not to arch your lower back when you return your pelvis to the center. Do at least 10 tilts a day.

If you do the standing erect version, keep your legs at hip distance apart with your knees slightly bent. Tupler suggests keeping one arm at your side and placing the other on your lower back with your fingers facing downward. She says if your fingers are not facing straight down, bring your hips forward until they do. This is your starting position as you begin tilt

PREVENT/ C3

EXERCISE OF THE WEEK



45-degree bent over triceps

THIS exercise not only tightens and tones the triceps (muscles at the back of the arm) but also challenges the muscles of the legs and torso.

Equipment:
Dumbbells

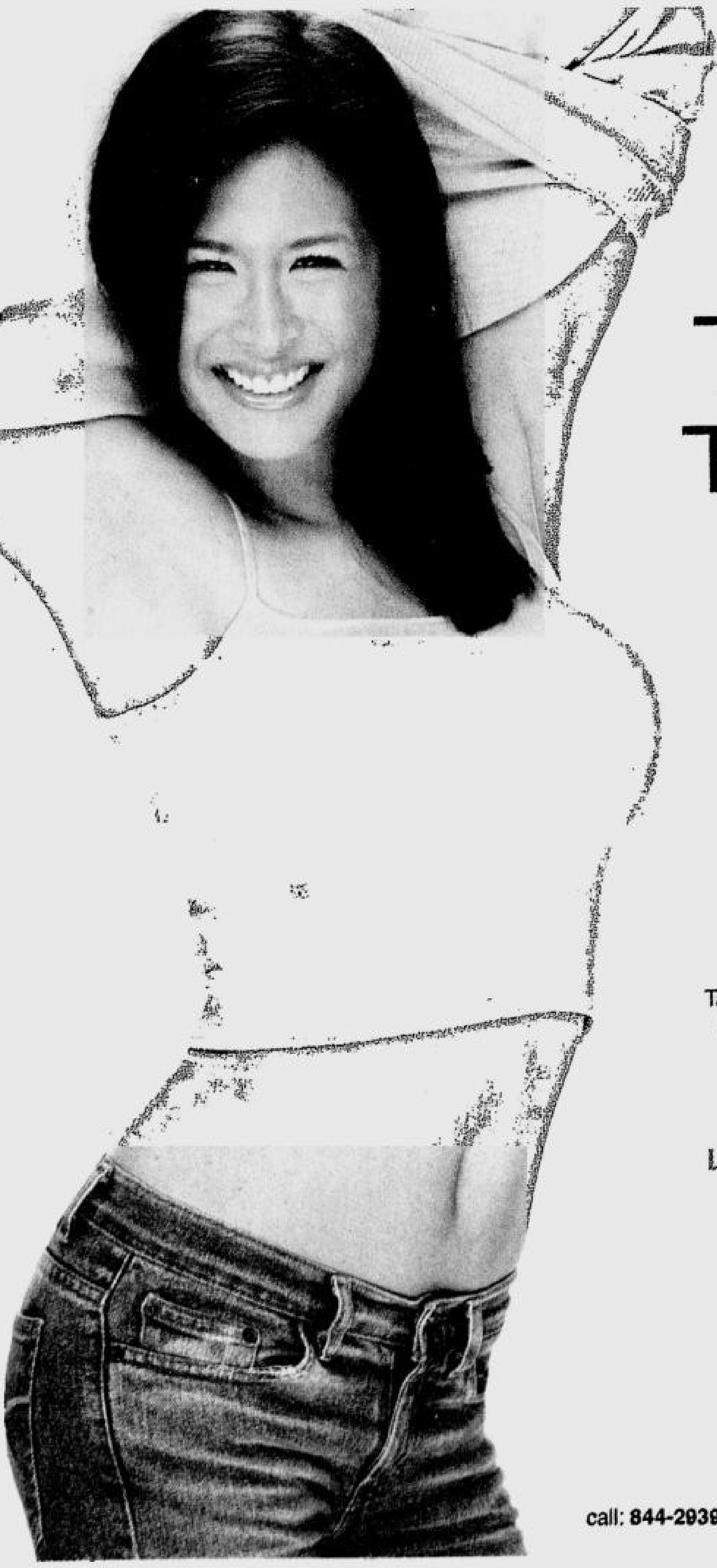
Exercise technique:

1. Stand with feet together and a dumbbell in each hand.
2. Bend forward from the hips at a 45-degree angle. Bend the knees and maintain a neutral spine (a straight spine with a natural curve in the lower back).
3. Bring elbows up until they are a little past your waist. This is your starting position.
4. Slowly straighten elbows backward with the palms facing the body.
5. Slowly return to starting position.
6. Do desired number of repetitions.

Performance tips:

1. This is an advance exercise. Do it only if you have enough strength in the lower back to maintain a neutral spine, otherwise, you can injure your lower back.
2. Hold the arm and shoulders steady in position. Move only from the elbow.
3. Straighten the elbow fully but move slowly with control Avoid swinging the weight.

Repetitions:
12-15 repetitions.



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LOVE conquers as East meets West—attractive Tessa Dragon and nice Glen Finlayson

BEACH wedding in Boracay for adorable model/actress G Tongi and her good-looking prince charming, Tim Walters

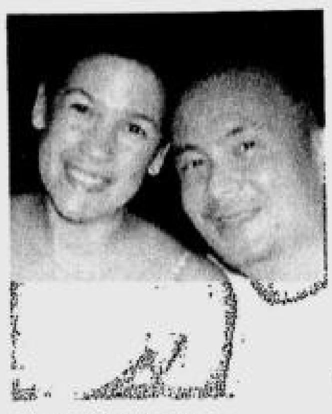
IS THIS FOR REAL? Cool KC Concepcion and good-looking friend Francis Ricafort

IT'S MARRIAGE in July of 2006 for Stephanie Zubiri and her French fiancé, business consultant Victor Delfour

STILL IN CLOUD NINE: Beautiful Cecilia "Iya" Tuason and her favorite engineer and husband, JM Floirendo Lagdameo

HOW BEAUTIFUL CAN YOU GET: It's champagne and caviar dreams for handsome Juan Elizalde and gorgeous Bianca Araneta.

BUSINESS tycoon Rafael Perez de Tagle with the queen of his heart, Vickie Villa Perez de T.


IT WAS BORACAY on Valentine's Day for lovey dovey Maryrose Cacho of Iloilo and Bacolod's Ricky Monfort.

IT'S STILL LOVE for Judy Duavit V. and husband Miguel Vazquez

LUCKY 13: Beautiful lovers of 13 years, handsome Johnny Velasquez and luscious Maripi Muscat

IT'S ALL GREEK TO HER: Dr. George Sarakinis will change dance empress Becky Garcia's last name in September.

MODEL Rachel Soriano, with ex-boyfriend, international businessman Jacques Dupasquier— skiing in Aspen, shopping in Los Angeles and breaking up in Cosmo Manille

Lovers and exes

WITHOUT BATTING AN EYELASH

Maurice Arcache

Photos by Alex Van Hagen using **Kodak** EasyShare system

AHH, Valentine—the time when love is in the air or, for some, on the way out. Whatever the reason, love is really a many splendored thing, *palanggas*. It can be one of those summer flings, backdoor romances or even the real thing, *n'est-çe pas*?

In this day and time, love has become a game. Today they love you, and tomorrow—what was that all about? I look around me and think why some super odd couples make it while those you think are perfect pairs break up faster than you can bat an eyelash.

And the most unlikely love affairs seem to be those most likely to succeed.

When you think about it, *palanggas*, love has two kinds of faithfulness. One is like a life-time work—you're trying like forever to find new things to love in him or her. Now, that's cool. The other is simply taking pride in being faithful. That sucks.

Hits and misses

Yet, there are many examples of Cupid aiming his arrow and hitting the bull's eye!

Take glamorous, talented knit queen **Lulu Tan Gan** who, against all odds ended up happily ever after with her business entrepreneur husband, macho-man **Josef Gueta.** Then we have East meets West—Senator **Jamby Madrigal** goes diving in Bohol and meets the man who changes her last name, the French **Eric Dudoignon-Valade.** Debonaire **Johnny Velasquez** and **Maripi Muscat**, 13 years as lovers and still going strong.

Vivacious **Vickie** and husband business magnate **Rafael Perez de Tagle**, united they stood and united they are still standing. Cupid was right on the mark with gorgeous bag princess **Bea Valdez** and business entrepreneur **Jackie Rodriguez.** Bea V's ex-husband, Hong Kong-based businessman **David Jacobs** hit it off with another gorgeous looker, **Bianca Zobel**, leaving David J's ex-television glam gal, **Pinky Webb**, still looking for her prince charming. Bianca Z's ex-boyfriend, handsome **Jessi Maxwell**, is also still looking for his princess.

My *palangga*, "it" gal of the season, **Celine Lopez,** was with architect **Victor Consunji** for two years before Portuguese **Antonio Garcia** of the Asian Development Bank. She washed him out of her hair faster than you can bat an eyelash, with the entry of Ogilvy and Mather's achiever, **Manny del Rosario.** There was love for a while, but now both Celine and Manny are footloose and fancy free again.

Waiting game

Cupid had stunningly beautiful **Carol Masibay G.** and Senator **Mar Roxas** a hot-hot item for over two years. But now Mar R has paired up with TV's hotshot personality, **Korina Sanchez,** who used to be with good-looking **Paul Aquino.**

The million dollar question is... will Mar finally say goodbye to his exciting bachelor life and settle down with Korina? Or is this all about politics? Ahh, wait-and-see is the game, *palanggas*.

Naturellement, we also have the sad news of another TV super gal saying goodbye to her shy-ish husband after years of marriage and a couple of kids. "It just didn't work out for us." she told *moi*.

And last, but definitely not the least, the hot-hot but short-lived love affair of two beautiful personas—ace underwater photographer **Gutsy Tuason** and deliciously beautiful **Amanda Griffin.**

Fascinating Boracay had tons of lovers on Valentine's Day basking in the sun by day then dining and romancing by night.

Lovers of all kinds

There were the happily married couples, unmarried lovers, and husbands and wives with dangerous liaisons.

As always, the renowned Pearl of the Pacific had the best Valentine night, providing the right kind of ambiance for all kinds of lovers, dahlings. In each cabana on the beach, tables were set up for candlelit dinners for two while a quartet played romantic songs for that extra touch of romance.

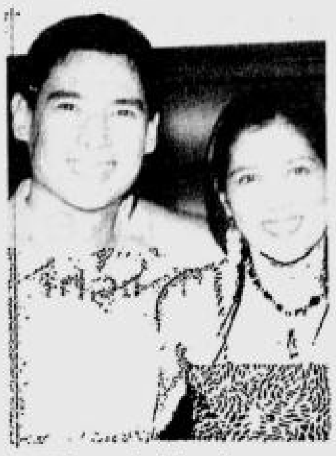
An excellent five-course dinner, complemented with wine or champagne, was prepared by the resort's top chef, **Tony Castro.** The climax of the romantic night at the Pearl was the Valentine gift of heart-shaped dark and white chocolate. But I ain't saying what happened the rest of the night.

Ahh, *l'amour toujour l'amour*.

Yes, dahlings, as a **Ray Charles** song goes, "You'll never know/ the one who loves you so," cause even in the game of love, you win some, you lose some. But there's hope in the air. Who knows where naughty little Cupid will point his arrow in the next 10 months? He may just have you in his sights, *palanggas*, so stay cool.

NEW YEAR, NEW LOVES: After several months, Celine Lopez, and ex-love Manny del Rosario have become "just friends."

THE BODY AND THE HUNK. Hot hot lovers: sexy, articulate actress Gwen Garci and her British love, Andrew Wolf


GOD keeps their love's foundation solid: Manuel Zubiri and his wife, Ana Garcia

VALENTINE and birthday in Boracay for Monte Carlo's top banker, Eduardo "Nene" Lacson, with Brazilian guest, Fernando Franco

EVERLASTING LOVE IN BORACAY: Gov. Bongbong Marcos with his favorite lawyer, brilliant Liza Marcos—blissful after 12 years of marriage—with silver anniversary couple, Iñigo Zobel and Maricris Cardenas

LOVE IS A MANY SPLENDORED THING: 13 years of marriage going on 14 for Bito Mantecon and wife, vivacious Menchu Gonzalez, with mega business entrepreneur Al Tengco, who found love in classic beauty Carla Reyes onwards to 11 years

PARTYING BORACAY-STYLE: Stunningly gorgeous Carol Masibay G., Monte Carlo-based international businessman George Rybarcyk, with free-again beauty Niña Romualdez, and *moi*

LOVERS FOR 50 GOLDEN YEARS AND STILL COUNTING: Business magnate Paing Hechanova and Mely Concepcion during their renewal of vows

LOVERS FOREVER: Nene and Jun Leonor—Cupid still watches over these popular grandparents.

THE COLONEL AND HIS GAL: Col. Jolly Mabanta and wife Gigi, Louis Vuitton's loss and Rustan's shining star

The soul never forgets

INNER AWARENESS

Jaime T. Licauco

WHEN she was only 5 years old, Shanti Devi of India told her mother she had another name, that she had several children, that she died giving birth to her baby in a town some 50 miles from their own and that her husband was still alive.

Her mother dismissed her daughter's claims to be mere products of a child's fertile imagination. When Shanti was 9 years old, a man from that town where she said she lived in a previous life visited her family. The mother asked if he knew the woman Shanti mentioned who died during childbirth.

The visitor said there was such a woman and he knew the family very well. A subsequent trip to that town, together with scientific investigators, like Dr. Ian Stevenson, confirmed every detail of what the child told her mother, details no one could have known except somebody who experienced them.

Ghandi was reported to have sought an audience with the woman who remembered completely her past life.

The story of Shanti Devi has filled many books on reincarnation because of the richness of her memory of details of her past life that have been verified.

Glimpses of the past

But everyone of us has, to a certain extent, glimpses of our past life. For example, how many of us have had dreams of being in a foreign country, wearing a certain costume and talking in a strange language? How many of us visited a place for the first time and got a distinct feeling that we had been there before? We can even give details of what we will find inside that place.

And how many of us, though seeing a person for the very first time, have the feeling we knew that person before? Sometimes the feeling is instant attraction, at other times instant repulsion. What accounts for that seemingly irrational reaction on our part? We have often heard cases of "instant love" or "love at first sight." What accounts for these emotions?

These can be explained by the fact that the soul never forgets. Our subconscious mind holds the memory of all our past incarnations on earth, and even of those lifetimes we may have spent in some other galaxies or planetary systems.

But because we are so focused on the earth plane, we seldom pay attention to inner voices from the very depths of our souls.

Past connections

The reason two people get attracted to each other in this lifetime is because they have had similar encounters in their past incarnations on earth. Your spouse or lover may have been your sister, or mother or child in the past. Your child may have been your lover in the past, and your enemy may have been somebody who betrayed you in the past, etc.

You meet each other again now because you have to work out your karma with that person. Until that karma is fulfilled or exhausted, until you have learned to forgive and let go, you will meet that person again and again in future lifetimes.

Remember that both great love and great hatred will bind you to another person. So if you don't want to meet your enemy again in a future life, you have to learn to forgive and release that person.

It is the same with selfish or possessive love. You have to learn to let go and allow your loved one to grow by interacting with other people. Love must be unconditional or unselfish so as not to have karmic repercussions.

> Both great love and great hatred will bind you to another person

Each encounter we may have with people from our past lives affords us the golden opportunity to work out our karma with them, pay our debts, or learn a lesson in love or forgiveness, patience or selflessness.

Sometimes the lessons we get are difficult and painful but they have to be regarded as opportunities for growth in spirituality and understanding.

So, in this month of love, let us learn to go deeper and discover what binds you to another. Usually it is a past life experience you had with that person.

Without an understanding of past life connections we have with others, we will not be able to work out our karma with that person and will be condemned to live life over and over again with that person in a vicious cycle until both of us learn what we are supposed to learn in this lifetime.

Address letters to this column to Prince Plaza I, 106 Legazpi St., Legazpi Village, Makati City. Call 8107245 or 8926806 for information on seminars I conduct. E-mail: jlicauco@edsamail.com.ph. Visit my website at http://jlicauco.shorturl.com. Listen to my dzMM radio program 7-8 p.m. every Sunday

One-day workshop on cosmetic procedures

A ONE-DAY live surgical workshop showcasing the latest beauty enhancement technology and professional skills of top Filipino cosmetic surgeons will be conducted on Feb. 27 at the De los Santos Medical Center in Quezon City.

Dr. Rosario Ballecer, Philippine Society for Cosmetic Surgery (PSCS) spokesperson, said the workshop will feature 10 surgeons.

The workshop will discuss "Minimally Invasive Suspension Suture Techniques combined with Classical Techniques (Facial, Neck, Breast and Buttocks)" and "Latest Technology in Hair Transplantation."

Led by PSCS president Dr. Corazon Collantes-José, the workshop will give an update on the safest and most effective surgical methods at reasonable costs.

Scheduled to address the workshop are:

Dr. Longin Zureck (Full Facelift Suspension Suture Technique–Zureck Thread); Dr. Manuel Fernandez Jr. (Scalp Suspension Technique); Dr. Andrew Pineda (Hair Transplantation–Latest Trends); Dr. Mariano Agcaolli (Classical Temporal Lift with Combined Suspension Suture Technique); Ballecer and Dr. Gold Gonzales (Frown Obliteration and Breast Suspension Techniques); Dr. Jaime Capco, Dr. Angeles Morales de Leon and Dr.Fatima Regala (Brow Lift Suspension Technique using Prolenc)l; Dr. Ferdinand Buencamino (Suspension Suture–Jowls); Collantes-José, Dr. Agnes Thaebtharn and Dr. Teresita Ferrariz (neck lift–Crisscross Sling Suspension Technique); Dr. Narciso Adraneda, Dr. Ferdinand Carlos and Dr. Zuriel Tan (Chin and Buttocks Bbunching); and Dr. Leonardo Abogado (Malar or Cheek Lift).

Prevent lower back pain. . .

From page C1

ing your pelvis forward.

For the hands above knees method, your legs are hip-width apart, knees bent. Place your hands on your thighs and use your arms to carry the weight of your upper body as you lean forward. Keep your knees still as you tilt your pelvic bones forward. Tupler says only the pelvis should move. The knees should not move at all.

In the all-fours technique, get on your hands and knees on top of an exercise mat or rug to cushion the knees. Keep your upper back still and flat when you tilt your pelvis forward so that you can feel the lengthening of your lower back muscles.

If you are a "pregnant" man with a big hard belly from too much alcohol and *pulutan*, you may experience lower back aches and pains for the very same reason mothers-to-be do. You can "belly dance" for temporary relief but a more permanent solution would be to lose weight and shrink your belly.

Check with your doctor

Every woman and every pregnancy is different. Always check with your doctor first before doing any kind of exercise. The same goes for the Tupler method.

* * *

The Association of Fitness Professionals of the Phils. will hold a one-day seminar on Feb. 26 at the University of the Philippines Diliman Campus. Topics: "The Latest Fitness Trends & Research," "Exercise for Menopausal Women," "Agility Training for Badminton," "Cardio Dance," "Latin Aerobics," "Yoga Pilates Fusion" and "Hip Hop." Call 9202762 or 0917-5181202.

Visit www.tinajuanfitness.info.

Convention tackles anti-aging technology

THE 2ND Anti-Aging Convention will be hosted by the Philippine Anti-Aging Medical Society, Inc. (PAAMS) tomorrow (Feb. 23) at the Westin Philippine Plaza Hotel.

Topics to be covered are Mesotherapy, Botox, the miracle of Radiofrequency, and IPL-Xenolite. PAAMS president Dr. Joel Mendez will give the welcome remarks.

Mendez of the Weigh Less Center clinics organized PAAMS in 2003 to analyze the various aspects of the process of aging.

PAAMS has since linked with various fields of medicine—Bariatrics, Dermatology, Family Medicine, Gerontology, Internal Medicine, Orthopedics, and Ophthalmology. It has hundreds of local and foreign core members and affiliates.

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Take Charge Doc!

Dr. Nicky S. Montoya

Take Charge Doc! is your weekly question and answer guide on general health issues and illnesses. MEDICard's Medical Director, Dr. Nicky Montoya answers questions on health through the assistance and expertise of MEDICard's network of accredited specialists. And in a common thrust with the campaigns of the government, Take Charge Doc! parallels its features on the Calendar of Health Events of the Department of Health.

What is Heart Failure?

Heart failure is a serious condition wherein the heart is unable to pump enough quantities of blood to meet the body's normal requirements for oxygen and nutrients. It is a serious condition because about half of patients with heart failure die within 5 years of symptom onset, especially when proper treatment is not instituted early.

Any disease that affects the heart and interferes with circulation can lead to heart failure. Patients with coronary heart disease or blockage of arteries leading to the heart can suffer a massive heart attack that will manifest eventually with heart failure because the area of the heart affected will no longer contribute to its pumping capability. Uncontrolled hypertension or persistent elevations in blood pressure makes the heart work harder, enlarging the heart and impairing its pumping ability leading to heart failure. Abnormalities of the heart valves, whether congenital (inborn) or rheumatic (secondary to rheumatic fever) can likewise lead to heart failure.

Early treatment of heart failure will improve one's quality of life, more importantly prolong the life of a patient. If you have symptoms of easy fatigability, difficulty in breathing, shortness of breath, chest tightness and swelling of the feet or legs, you should consult your doctor immediately.

Cardiologist **Dr. Oscar Payawal Jr.** provides us with the answer to our feature question on Heart Failure. Dr. Payawal, our accredited specialist at Fatima Medical Center (FMC) in Valenzuela, has been an accredited MEDICard doctor since 1999. He specializes in Internal Medicine and has been in practice of his profession for over 10 years. Doc Oscar is a graduate of Medicine from UERM-MMC. From 1985 to 1988, he took residency training in Internal Medicine at the Cardinal Santos Hospital. The years following, he pursued residency for subspecializations in Adult Cardiology and Invasive Cardiology at the Philippine Heart Center for Asia. In 1998 and 1999, Dr. Payawal received recognition as Presidential Awardee of the Philippine Heart Association for his meritorious achievements as Chairman of Council on Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation. MEDICard members can seek the consultation services of Dr. Oscar Payawal at the Heart Station of FMC, Room 401 from Mondays to Wednesdays, 9 AM to 12 noon.

BE HEARD AND BE READ. Write to DR. NICKY S. MONTOYA (c/o *TAKE CHARGE DOC!*) or e-mail him at inquiry@medicardphils.com for inquiries on health matters.

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A wound results when skin tissue is destroyed or severed. Wounds may be produced by mechanical injury like a knock or blow (e.g. lacerations or tear wounds due to injuries); cuts (e.g. surgical wounds), punctures, shots or bites; exposure to extreme temperature (e.g. scalds or burns and frostbites); accidents (e.g. chemical burns); and physical conditions (e.g. acne). As wounds heal, scarring occurs. They may become atrophic scars ("depressed" scars), hyperthophic scars (bulging scars) or, keloidal scars (forms long after the wound has healed and continues to grow over the wound and onto the healthy skin like claws of a crab).

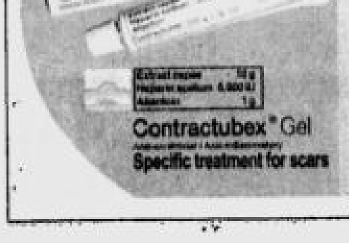
TREATMENT OPTIONS ARE AVAILABLE FOR REMOVING SCARS. Among them is treating the scar tissue with a special gel like **CONTRACTUBEX®**. It contains extract cepae, heparin sodium and allantoin. Contractubex® helps heal both recent and old scars. Studies (Wufroth, Majewski & Chadzynska, Weisman, Janicki, et al.) show Contractubex® supports normal wound healing; prevents prolonged inflammation; improves inflammation signs such as reddening, swelling and pain; inhibits abnormal scar tissue formation; reduces irritation in the scar area; and improves scar elasticity.

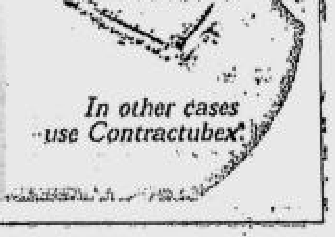
CONTRACTUBEX® TREATS FRESH AND OLD SCARS. The clinical efficacy of Contractubex® in treating fresh and longer-standing scars and keloids has been documented in numerous studies. In the course of therapy, scar size, color and hardness are reduced and symptoms associated with scars, such as itching, feelings of tension and pain, are improved. Timely treatment with Contractubex® has been shown to reduce scar length and width compared with untreated patients. While prompt scar treatment yielded favorable results, improvement was also achieved in older scars.

IT IS STILL IMPORTANT, HOWEVER, TO CARE FOR THE SCAR TISSUE RIGHT FROM THE START. By keeping it soft and supple you will have a greater chance of making the scar smooth, elastic and much less obvious. Contractubex® can be used as soon as the wound closes. It is important to protect the wound from external irritation and drying out.

Avoid exposure of the scar to intense sunlight, UV rays, sun beds, saunas and cold. Use a high factor sunscreen product on the scar when outdoors. Avoid wearing tight clothes which can rub scarred skin. Particularly protect scars located near bones (e.g. elbow, shin, ankle). Be careful not to injure scar tissue again, this makes the chances of healing less favorable. Rubbing or massaging Contractubex® over the scar, three to four times a day, for at least 1-2 minutes each application, yielded favorable results (for recent scars, rub gently; for older scars, rub vigorously).

Contractubex® is available in South Supermarket (Alabang) and in leading drugstores nationwide. For more information, please consult your doctor or email contractubex@organon.ph Text 09178523350 or call (632) 8177638.




Some scars fade away quickly

In other cases use Contractubex®

Antioxidants revolutionize view of health

PART I

INSIDE OUT

Cory Quirino

"YOUR body can be youthful well into your 70s, 80s, 90s and beyond."

—Dr. Lester Packer

Antioxidant science is here. It is revolutionizing the way we view health and its limits.

In his book "The Antioxidant Miracle," Lester Packer, Ph.D., director of the Packer Laboratory, University of California at Berkeley, affirms that the use of antioxidants can "rejuvenate your heart, strengthen the immune system, maximize your brain power and reverse the aging process."

What are antioxidants?

They are vitamins and minerals found in all kinds of food but are also manufactured by our bodies.

How important are antioxidants to health?

Antioxidants play a critical role in the pursuit of optimal health.

What antioxidants do I need to stay young and fit forever?

Believe in miracles. Here are the miracle workers:

While there are hundreds of antioxidants, only five seem to work in tandem with each other. Vitamins C and E, gluthathione, lipoic acid and co-enzyme Q10 are called network antioxidants. They are considered special because they strengthen each other's powers. Together, they are effective in boosting the body's ability to fight disease. More importantly, they can slowdown the aging process.

Can you get your antioxidant requirements from food alone?

All network antioxidants can be found in food although it isn't possible to get the optimal amount needed to fortify the immune system from food alone.

For example: A daily recommended dosage of 500 i.u. of Vitamin E can be had by eating more than 100 pounds of broiled liver or 125 tbsp of peanut oil. This is why supplements are suggested.

Can one die from lack of antioxidants?

People whose antioxidant levels are low are more likely to get sick. Many die prematurely from disease due to deficiencies in the antioxidant network. By simply adapting a wellness lifestyle and increasing the antioxidant intake, the risk of cancer, heart disease and other degenerative diseases can be reduced significantly.

What exactly do antioxidants do?

Antioxidants defend the body against free radicals. Think of them as an army of good soldiers fighting the enemy. Literally, they "disarm" free radicals before they can attack and damage any organ of the body.

The antioxidant absorbs a free radical making it part of its molecular structure. Now the antioxidant becomes a free radical but too weak to harm the body. Besides, the network antioxidants can regenerate one another after the assault and extend their powers to protect your health.

What are free radicals?

The body produces energy. Without energy, the body cannot function. To produce energy essential for every physical activity like moving, breathing, thinking, oxygen is needed.

However, the production of energy can actually cause havoc within the body because one of its by-products is a free radical. Free radicals are unstable molecules that can damage the structures of cells and can eventually lead to cancer, Alzheimer's and Parkinson's diseases, diabetes, arthritis and a host of other ailments linked to aging.

Cells are composed of atoms. Each atom has a nucleus surrounded by electrons. When biological oxidation occurs from the natural process of making energy, electrons move from one oxygen molecule to the next. The problem begins when an electron escapes. This escaped electron is called a free radical.

What then is the key to good health?

Maintain a good balance of antioxidants and free radicals. In order to do that, build up your body's antioxidant network of defense.

Are all free radicals bad?

No. They can be friend or enemy. Some free radicals at low levels do good things, too. They can turn on and off genes.

Example: Nitric oxide and super-oxide are free radicals produced in huge amounts by the immune cells to "poison" viruses and bacteria. (Note that some free radicals do kill cancer cells and there are cancer drugs designed to increase free radicals in the body.) However, within seconds, free radicals can "turn on us" and eventually make us sick.

If free radicals are not immediately checked, they can and will cause harm to the body.

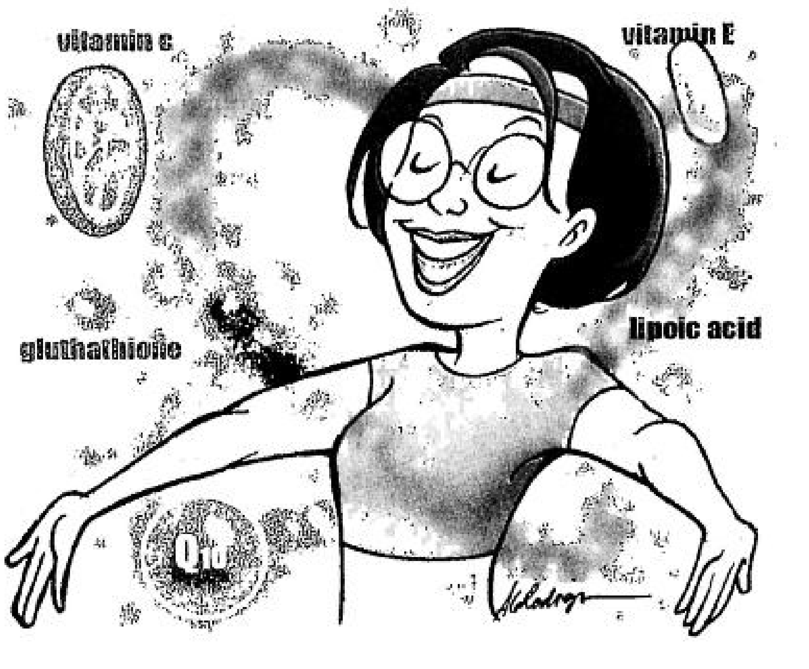
Next week: Making miracles with antioxidants

In the process of learning new ways of seeing and unlearning old ways of being, let us not forget that what fires up our imagination and fuels our passions is the love for life. So here's an affirmation for you.

"I affirm the life in me as deep as my heart can feel and as far as my spirit can see."

Love and light!

Special thanks to Pharmanex for this book that can save your life.



Gift of wellness for Heart Month

FEBRUARY is Heart Month so express your love by sharing or giving a bottle of organic red wine.

Available at Healthy Options, this gift of wellness is full-bodied and heart-friendly. It is suitable for both intimate and festive gatherings any time of the year.

Organic wines use the strongest and richest grapes that are grown without chemical fertilizers, weed killers and other chemicals.

Studies indicate that red wine helps prevent heart diseases. Among other things, it contains anti-oxidants (substances that neutralize damaging free radicals resulting from disease and environmental pollution). Specifically, red wine has been reported to release the anti-oxidant phenolics, blocking free radicals that, among other things, contribute to the development of cancer.

Red wine also helps prevent clotting of arteries and improves cholesterol levels, helping minimize the risk of stroke. It also helps prevent bone and joint diseases, as well as diabetes and gallstone problems.

Healthy Options has stores at Shangri-La Plaza Mall, Mandaluyong; Rustan's Supermarket, Makati; Festival Supermall, Filinvest, Alabang; Ayala Center, Cebu City; SM City, North Edsa; SM City, Manila; Greenbelt, Ayala Center, Makati; SM Megamall B, Edsa, Mandaluyong; SM Pampanga; and SM Bicutan. Visit www.healthyoptions.com.ph.

NUEVOMUNDO Cabernet Sauvignon/Malbec 2002 from Chile is an organic red wine available at Healthy Options. With 75 percent Cabernet Sauvignon and 25 percent Malbec grapes, it has subtle undertones of cedar, blackberries, currant flavors.

Free checkup for senior citizens

BOROUGH Medical Care Institute is offering free blood cholesterol, blood sugar, ECG, bone densitometry tests for senior citizens 9 am-12 noon, March 5. A senior citizen card is not required.

The institute is at the 6th floor of the Cybermall Building in Eastwood City, E. Rodriguez Avenue, Libis, Quezon City.

Available for consultation are cardiologist, ophthalmologist, dermatologist, eye/nose/throat specialist and others.

Senior citizens, aged 60 and above, are susceptible to problems like heart disease, hypertension, type II diabetes mellitus and osteoporosis. Many of the problems do not show any symptoms until the condition has become severe. Thus, the elderly are encouraged to have a medical examination at least once a year.

Borough Medical Care Institute is an outpatient multi-specialty medical and diagnostic facility.

Call 6871345/1369/1779.

Summer golf program

Plyosports is now offering summer golf acceleration program workouts using the Frappier Acceleration Sports Training module, the program used by the world's best athletes.

Plyosports' golf program is functional, which means you are trained for the actual golf movement. It also improves flexibility and balance and the ability to recover between shots, holes and matches through training of the energy system—anaerobic, aerobic and neuromuscular coordination. The program also improves power in distance. The ball is hit with the hips and lower legs, making the golf swing efficient and more compact for greater accuracy. As a result, you gain more confidence.

The program was devised by exercise physiologist John Frappier. It is being used by international professional players like Tiger Woods and Vijay Singh and local golf talents like top amateur player Jong Laput, and Ruby Chico Walker.

Already, some 300 local athletes have benefited from the program. They include Philippine Basketball Association players Jimmy Alapag, James Yap, Noy Castillo and Yancy de Ocampo; 15-year-old Kyle Dandan, the first Filipino to win an International Tennis Federation (ITF) tournament on Philippine soil; and 13-year-old Jessie Agra, a runner-up at this year's ITF.

Plyosports is at the Adidas Sports Kamp on 28 Street corner Libertad Drive, Fort Bonifacio Global City, Taguig, Metro Manila. A full session costs P15,000. Call 8161131.

Acne Problems? Get 'em off your back.

Now you can have a clear, smooth back that's totally free from painful, unsightly acne. Our **LightCure Acne Therapy** effectively treats moderate to severe acne on your back, face, or any part of your body - **3 times faster than other acne treatments!** It destroys acne bacteria and reduces skin inflammation, without harming other tissues and with a long-lasting preventive effect.

Coupled with **Power Peel**, the safest exfoliation treatment for the whole body that combats blemishes and reverses acne scars, your back will soon be smoother, softer to the touch.

Call the Facial Care Centre professionals now for your free consultation.

Facial care centre

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Where Beautiful Skin Happens

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